

OVERLAP

The cover art depicts a woman with long, flowing blonde hair, wearing a blue and white striped crop top and a yellow, tattered jacket. She has a tattoo that says "OPER" on her chest and "KNOW YOUR ROLE" on her right arm. She is holding a long, thin object, possibly a sword or a staff, and is standing in a dark, industrial environment. In the background, there are clothes hanging on a line, including a red shirt and a blue shirt. The overall style is a mix of comic book illustration and digital painting, with a gritty, post-apocalyptic feel. The title "OVERLAP" is written in large, white, distressed letters at the top, with a red splatter effect across it.

**TOM
MORELLO**

**SCOTT
HEPBURN**

**DAN
JACKSON**

ORCHID™



ORCHARD™

VOLUME 1

SCRIPT

TOM MORELLO

ART

SCOTT HEPBURN

COLORS

DAN JACKSON

LETTERS

NATE PIEKOS OF BLAMBOT®

COVER ART

MASSIMO CARNEVALE



DARK HORSE BOOKS

PRESIDENT & PUBLISHER
MIKE RICHARDSON

EDITORS
SIERRA HAHN & DAVE LAND

ASSISTANT EDITORS
JIM GIBBONS & PATRICK THORPE

COLLECTION DESIGNER
DAVID NESTELLE

SPECIAL THANKS TO MICHELE FISHER.

Neil Hankerson Executive Vice President • Tom Weddle Chief Financial Officer • Randy Stradley Vice President of Publishing • Michael Martens Vice President of Book Trade Sales • Anita Nelson Vice President of Business Affairs • David Scroggy Vice President of Product Development • Dale LaFountain Vice President of Information Technology • Darlene Vogel Senior Director of Print, Design, and Production • Ken Lizzi General Counsel • Matt Parkinson Senior Director of Marketing • Davey Estrada Editorial Director • Scott Allie Senior Managing Editor • Chris Warner Senior Books Editor • Diana Schutz Executive Editor • Cary Grazzini Director of Print and Development • Lia Ribacchi Art Director • Cara Niece Director of Scheduling

ORCHID VOLUME I

Text and illustrations of Orchid™ © 2011, 2012 Tom Morello. Dark Horse Books® and the Dark Horse logo are registered trademarks of Dark Horse Comics, Inc. All rights reserved. No portion of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the express written permission of Dark Horse Comics, Inc. Names, characters, places, and incidents featured in this publication either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons (living or dead), events, institutions, or locales, without satiric intent, is coincidental.

This volume reprints the comic-book series *Orchid* #1–#4 from Dark Horse Comics.

Published by Dark Horse Books
A division of Dark Horse Comics, Inc.
10956 SE Main Street
Milwaukie, OR 97222

DarkHorse.com
NightwatchmanMusic.com

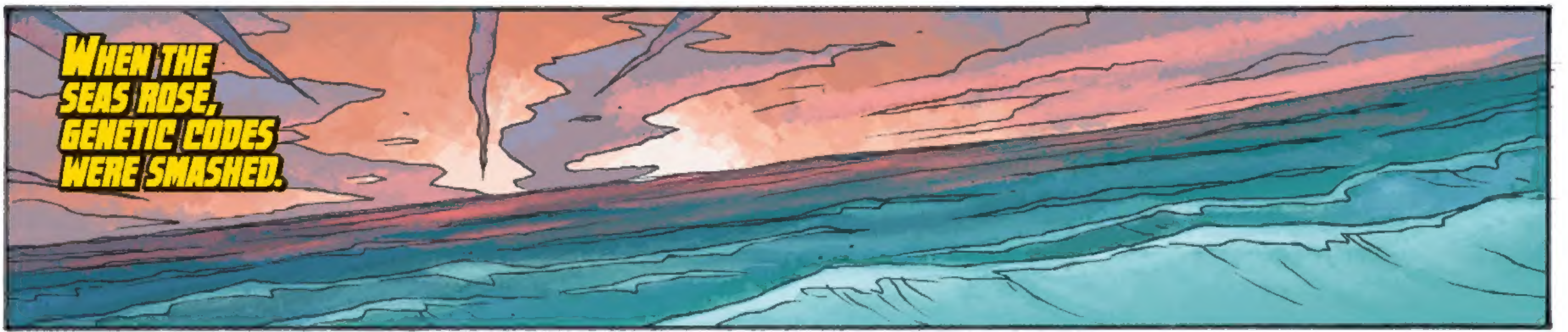
To find a comics shop in your area, call the Comic Shop Locator Service
toll-free at (888) 266-4226.

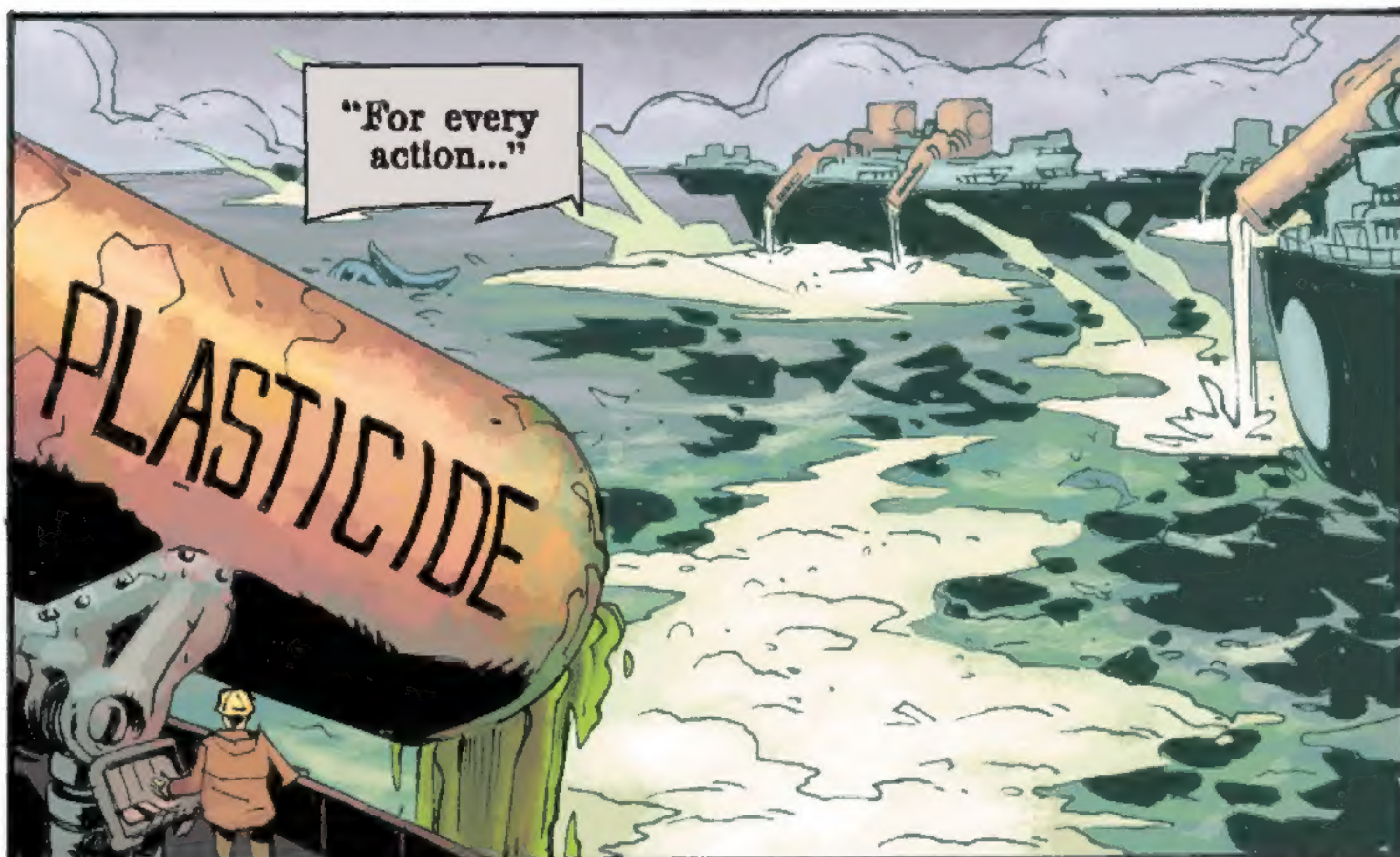
First edition: July 2012
ISBN 978-1-59582-965-8


10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
Printed by Midas Printing International, Ltd., Huizhou, China.












"The human settlements that remain are ringed by THE WILD, a dense, uncharted wilderness from which ferocious new animal species emerge to prey on the helpless.

"The high ground belongs to the rich and powerful. Fortreslike cities overlook vast expanses of desolate swampland, in which the scattered masses of castoff poor huddle in wet shantytowns under crumbling bridges.



"Iron-fisted rule ensures order with pitiless cruelty and allows the wealthy to harvest the poor as slaves.



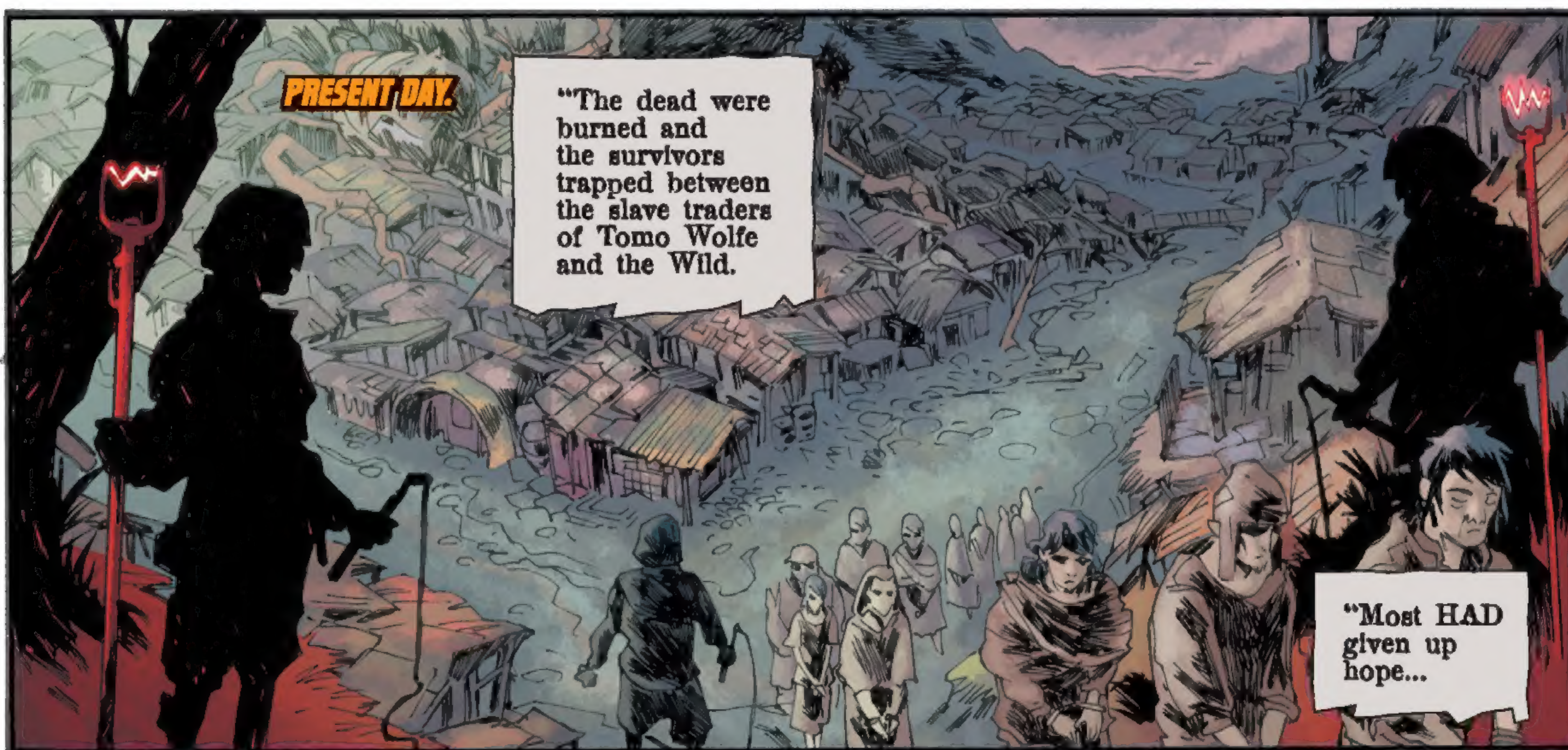
"These wretched
BRIDGE PEOPLE,
condemned to a
life of enslavement
and poverty, turned
to a quasi-religious
mythic warrior for
redemption.

"An army of the
dispossessed
formed under the
mysterious General
China—a masked
leader who led an
assault on dictator
Tomo Wolfe's
impregnable
mountain city,
Fortress Penuel.



"But the
rebellion
failed.

"General China
died in battle,
the infamous mask
taken as a prize
by Tomo Wolfe."



PRESENT DAY.

"The dead were
burned and
the survivors
trapped between
the slave traders
of Tomo Wolfe
and the Wild.

"Most HAD
given up
hope...

"...yet some refused to surrender.

"A young fighter named Anzio led a suicide raid on an armed caravan en route to Fortress Penuel. Against all odds he and his SHADOW REBELS 'liberated' the mask taken from the defeated General China.

"The mask was a symbol of hope, of resistance...and they were willing to die for it.

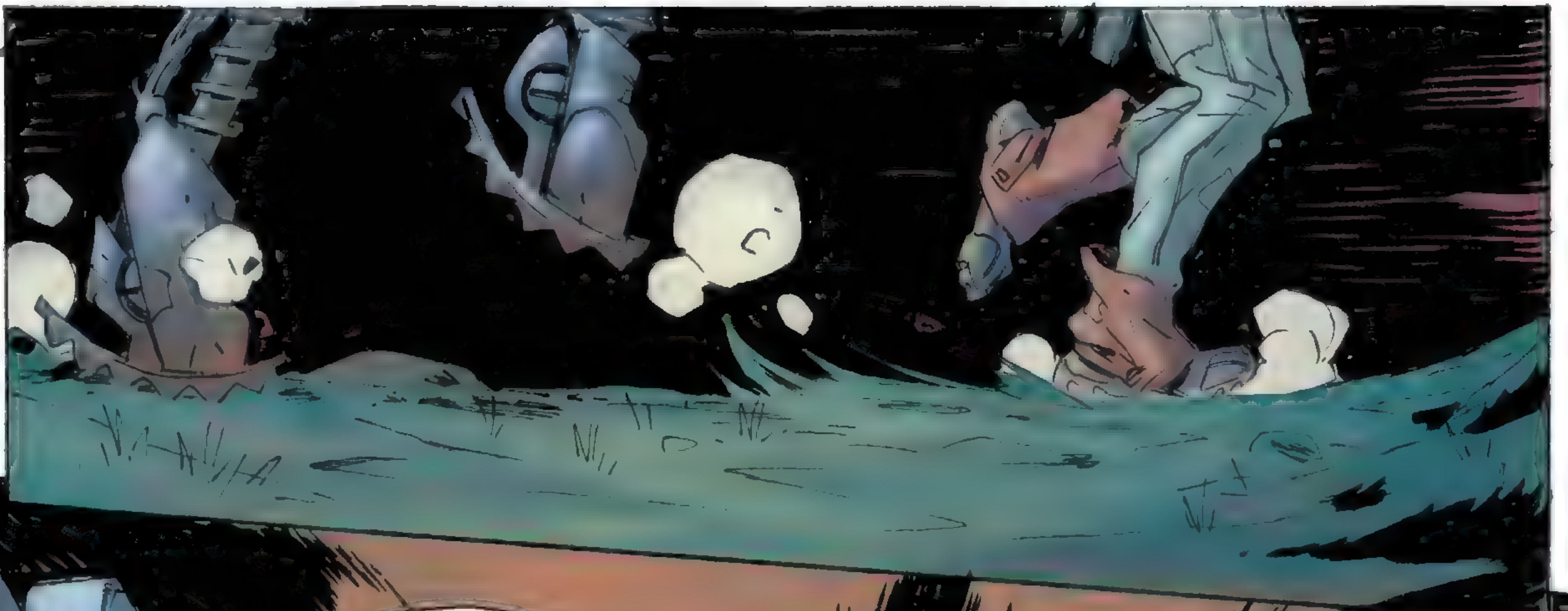
"The mask was also rumored to grant tremendous but perilous power to the one who wore it."

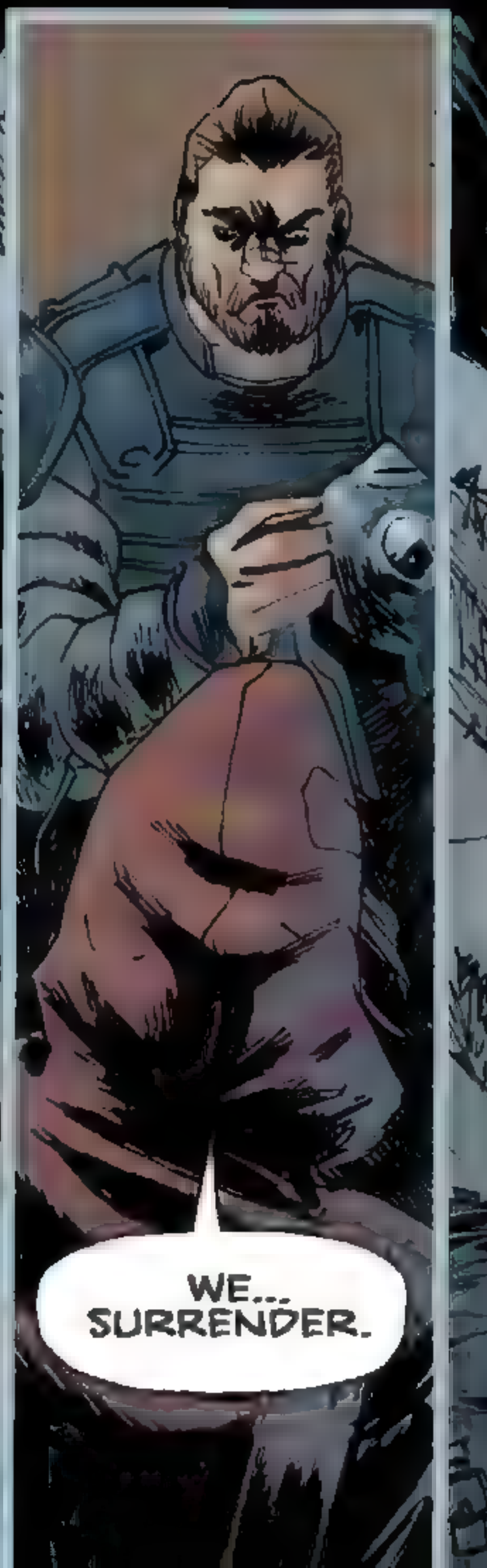
RUN!!

KEEP UP, SIMON!

OH, I'M JUST ENJOYING **3GASP3** THE SUNSET. OCHRE HUE, WOULDN'T YOU **3GULP3** SAY? AND DID YOU CATCH THAT **3WHEEZE3** WHIFF OF AZALEAS ON THE BREEZE? LOVELY **3GASP3** EVENING. MUST WE RUSH?

JUST SHUT UP...AND **RUN!**







THE PRISONERS ARE SECURED, DON GLETKIN.

YES. THE GREAT AND CUNNING ANZIO WAS NEITHER SO GREAT NOR SO CUNNING THIS TIME! ANSWER ME THIS BEFORE YOU DIE, YOU IMPUDENT FILTH, WHERE AMONG THE BRIDGES IS THE *SHADOW REBEL* ENCLAVE?!

TELL ME *NOW*...AND PERHAPS I'LL SPARE THESE OTHER WATER RATS!



Bah! WHEN YOU SUPERSTITIOUS FOOLS STOLE THIS "HOLY" MASK, YOU CHOSE YOUR FATE!

GAAH!!



BEHOLD THE FILTHY REMAINS OF A FILTHY PEOPLE!

AAGH!



KLIK



PERHAPS THIS ONE WILL DIE MORE BRAVELY, NO?

OR, "GREAT ANZIO," DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

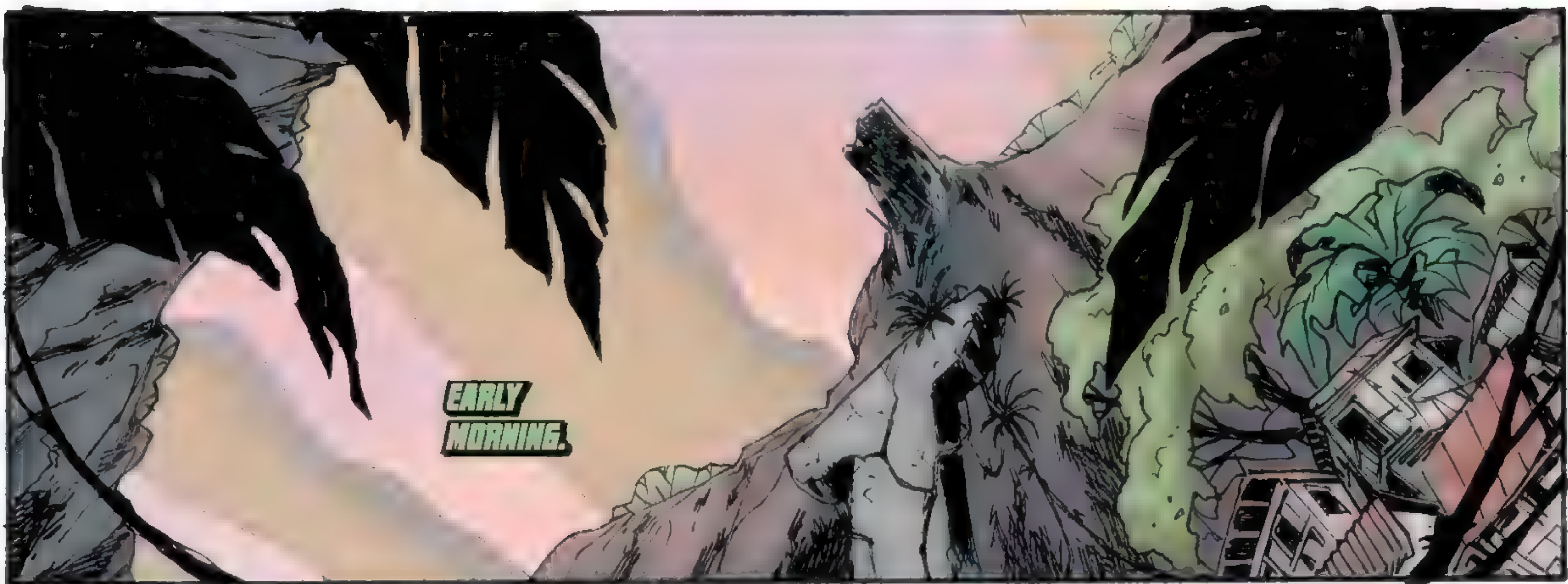


OOF!

NO!







EARLY
MORNING.



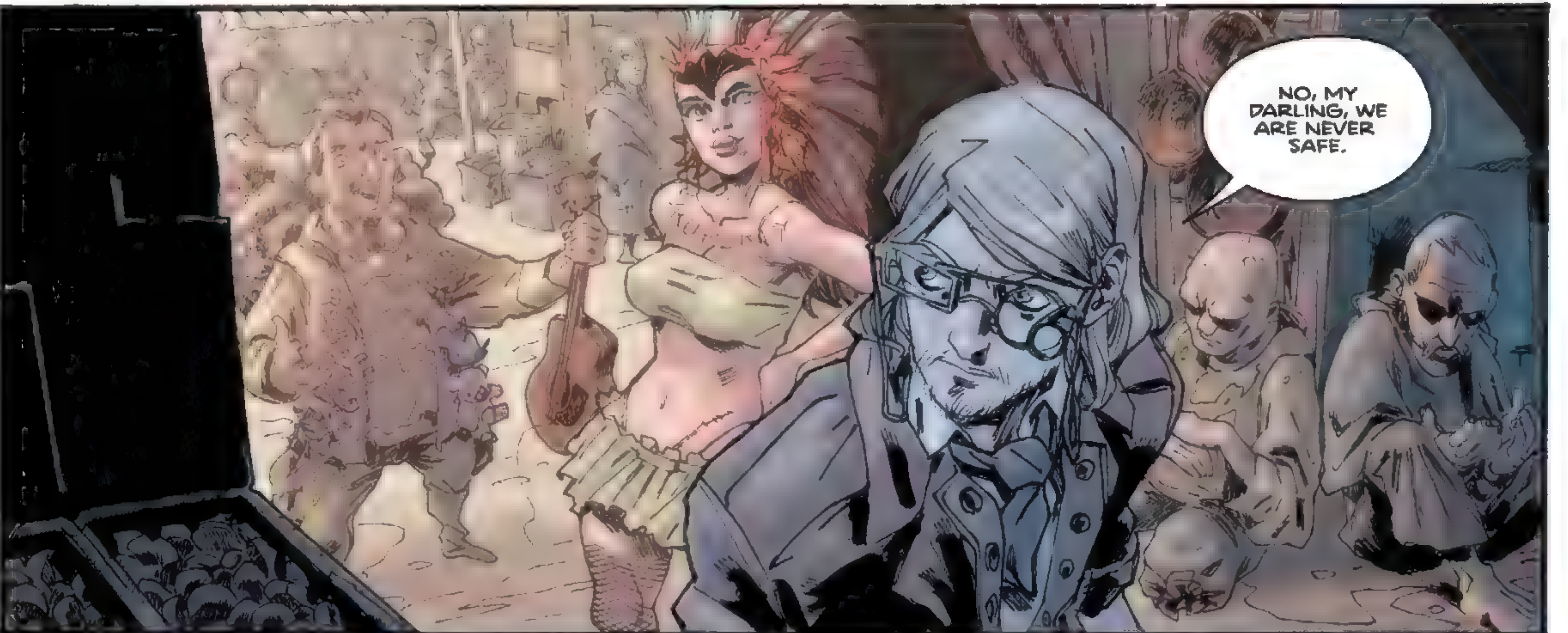
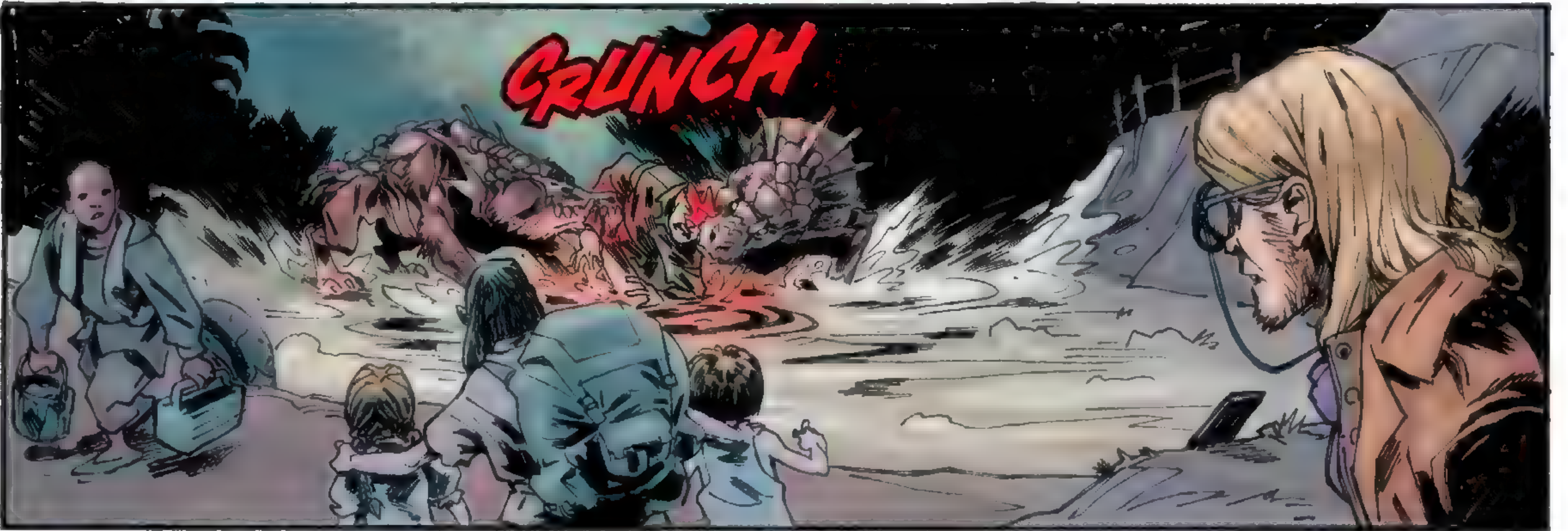
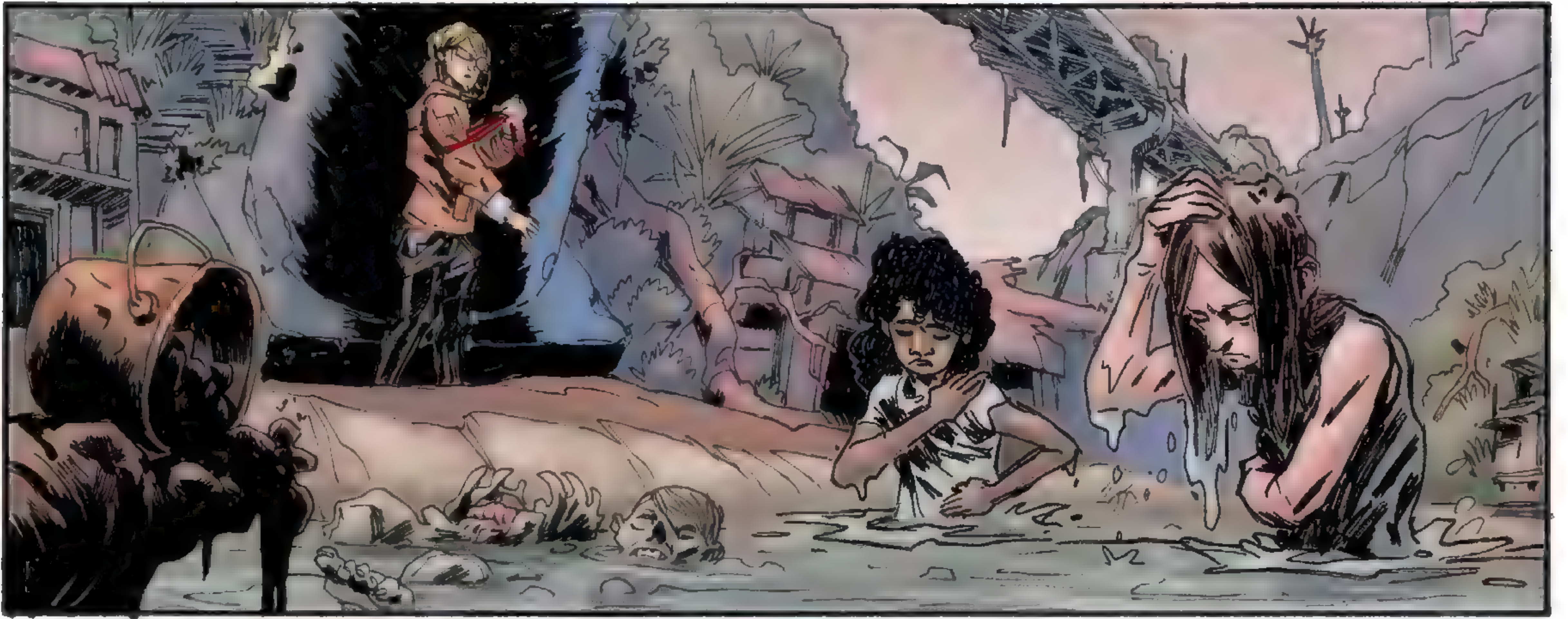
AH! I'M
ALIVE! HOW
LONG?
ONE DAY?
TWO?

SIX YEARS
IN THE SLAVE PITS.
ANOTHER SIX IN
THE ROBOTICS SLAVE
CORPS. TWO YEARS
ON THE RUN WITH
ANZIO AND THE
SHADOW REBELS
AND NOW...I'M
ALONE.

BUT...
I'M
ALIVE.

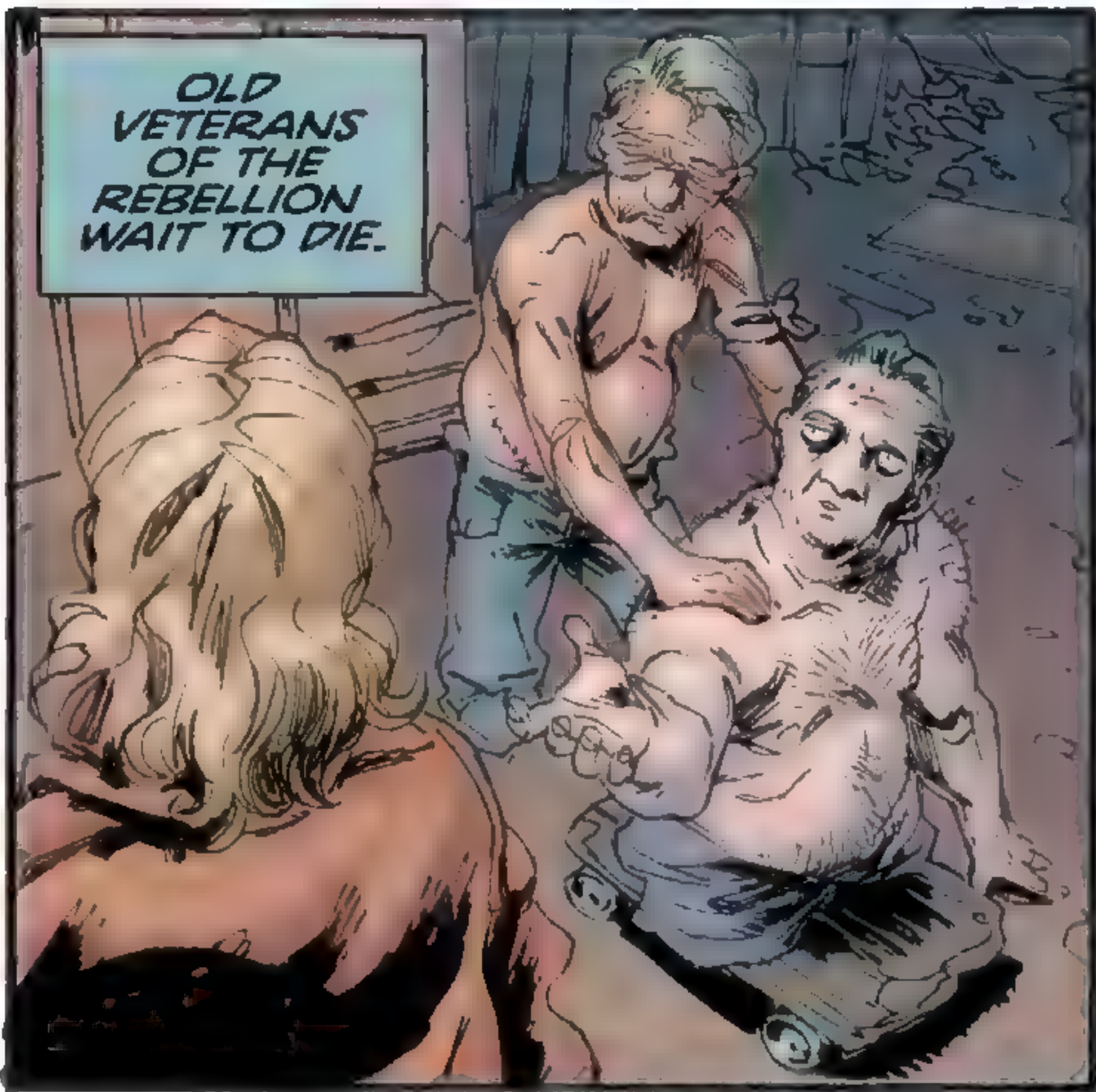


AND
IT'S GOOD
TO BE
HOME.

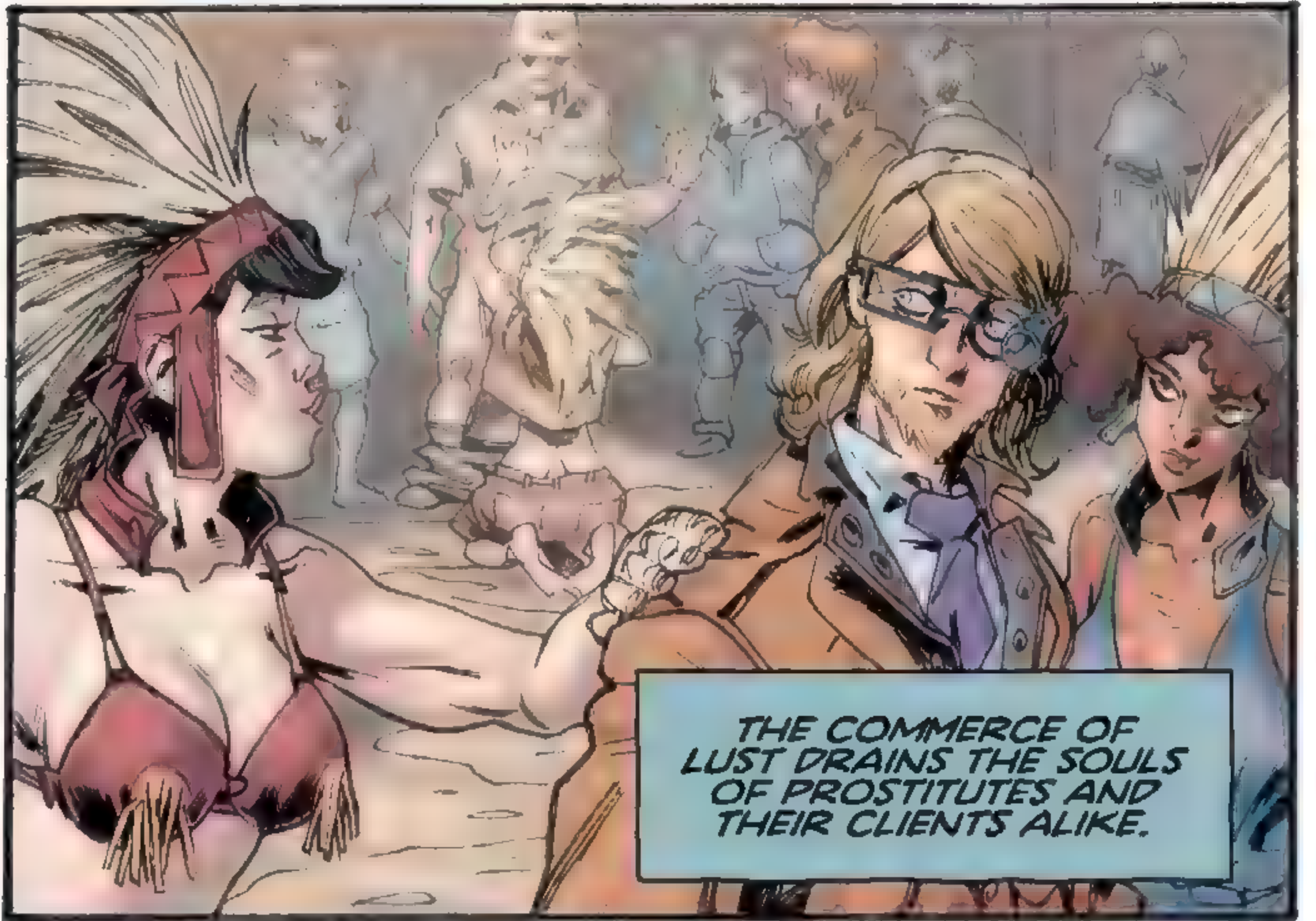




THE LEECH
ADDICTS DULL
THE DAY.



OLD
VETERANS
OF THE
REBELLION
WAIT TO DIE.



THE COMMERCE OF
LUST DRAINS THE SOULS
OF PROSTITUTES AND
THEIR CLIENTS ALIKE.



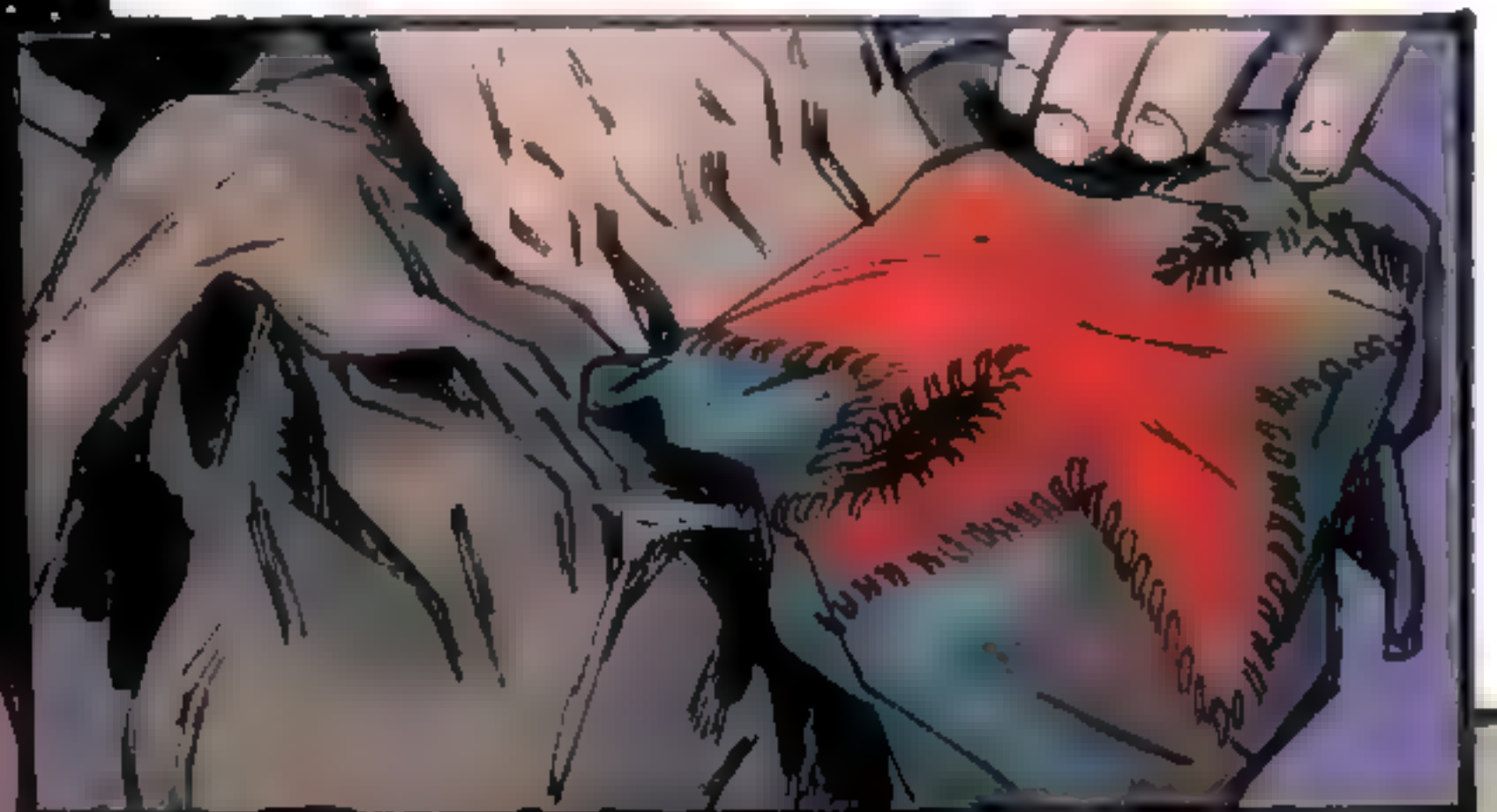
THE SLAVE
TRADERS CULL
OUR STRONGEST
TO IL IN THE
PITS OF PENUEL.

OUT
OF THE
WAY!



...SPEAK UP!
HAVE YOU SEEN
THE MAN? WHICH
OF YOU WILL BE
NEXT?!

AND EVERY "CRIME"
BRINGS THE WHIP
AND THE BRAND!

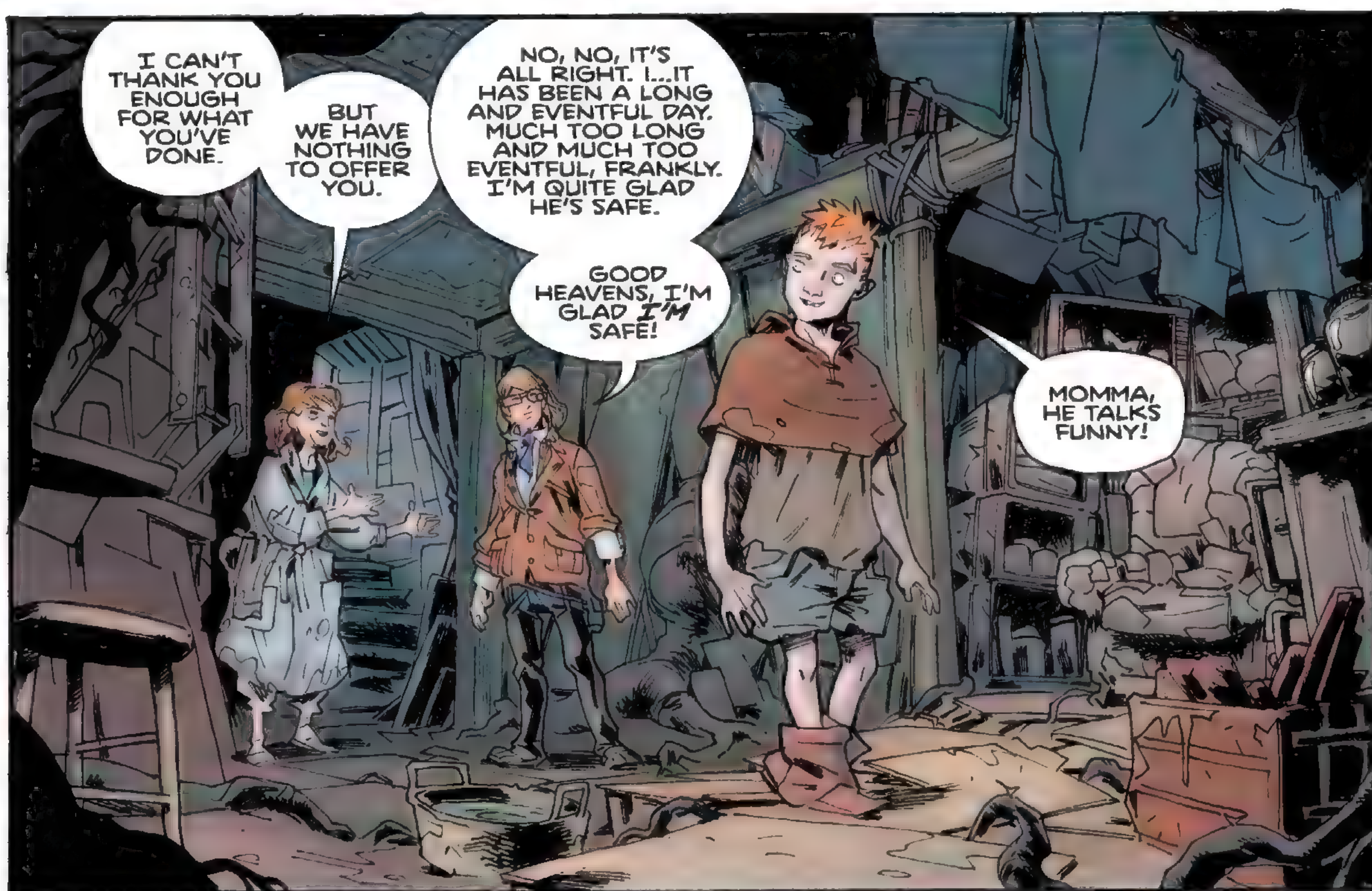
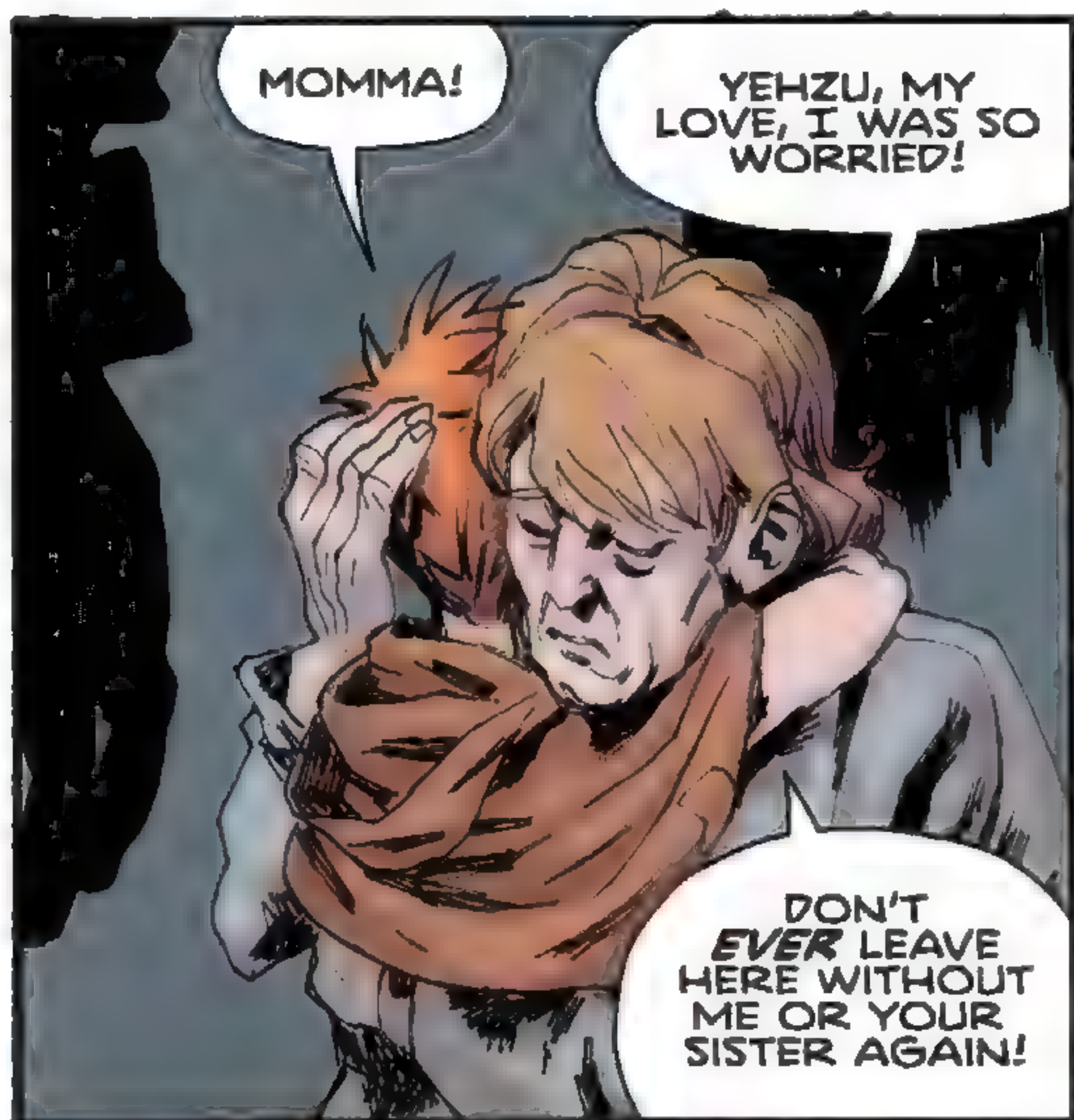


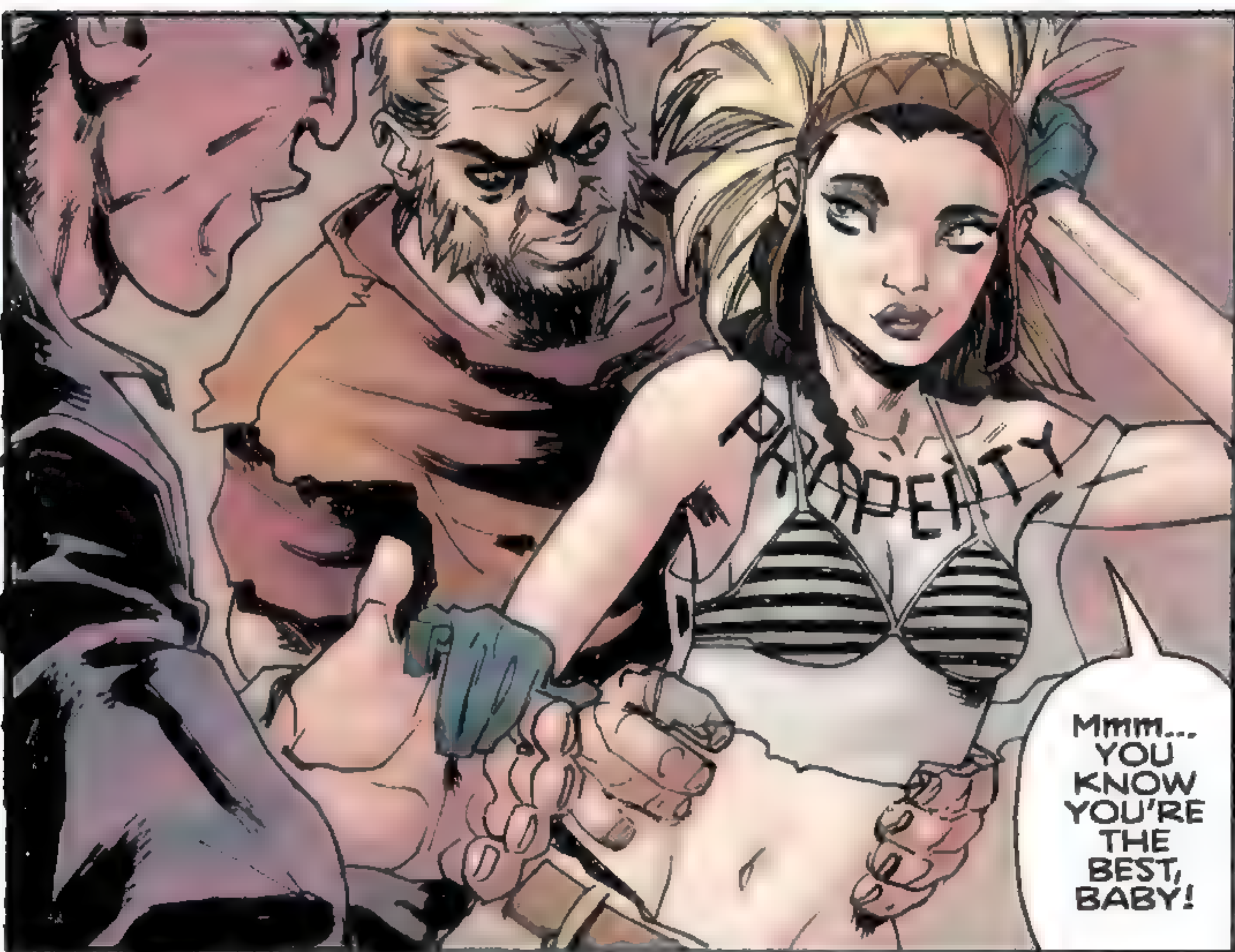
MAYBE
GLETKIN
WAS RIGHT.
WE ARE
THE FILTHY
REMAINS
OF A
FILTHY
PEOPLE...

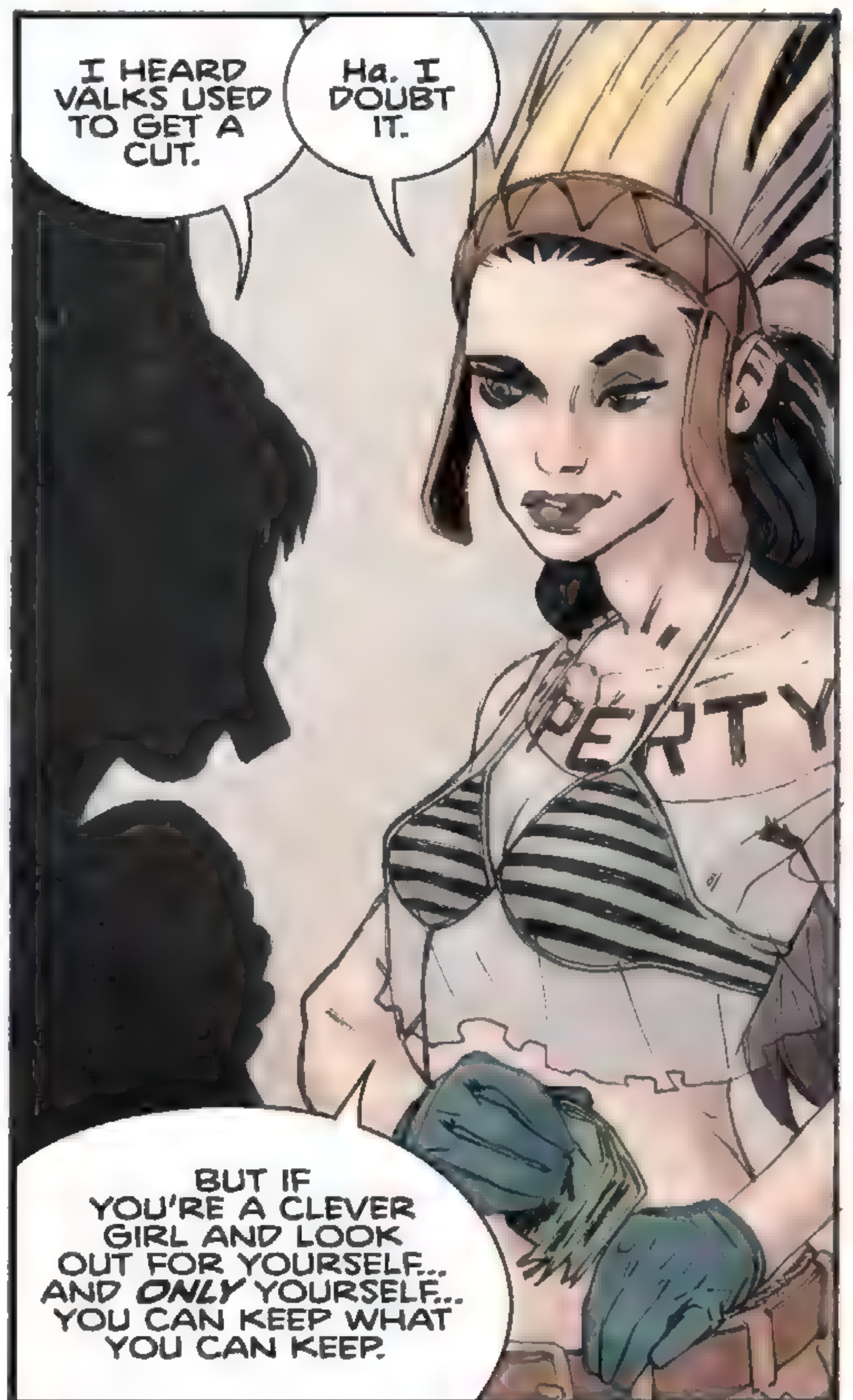
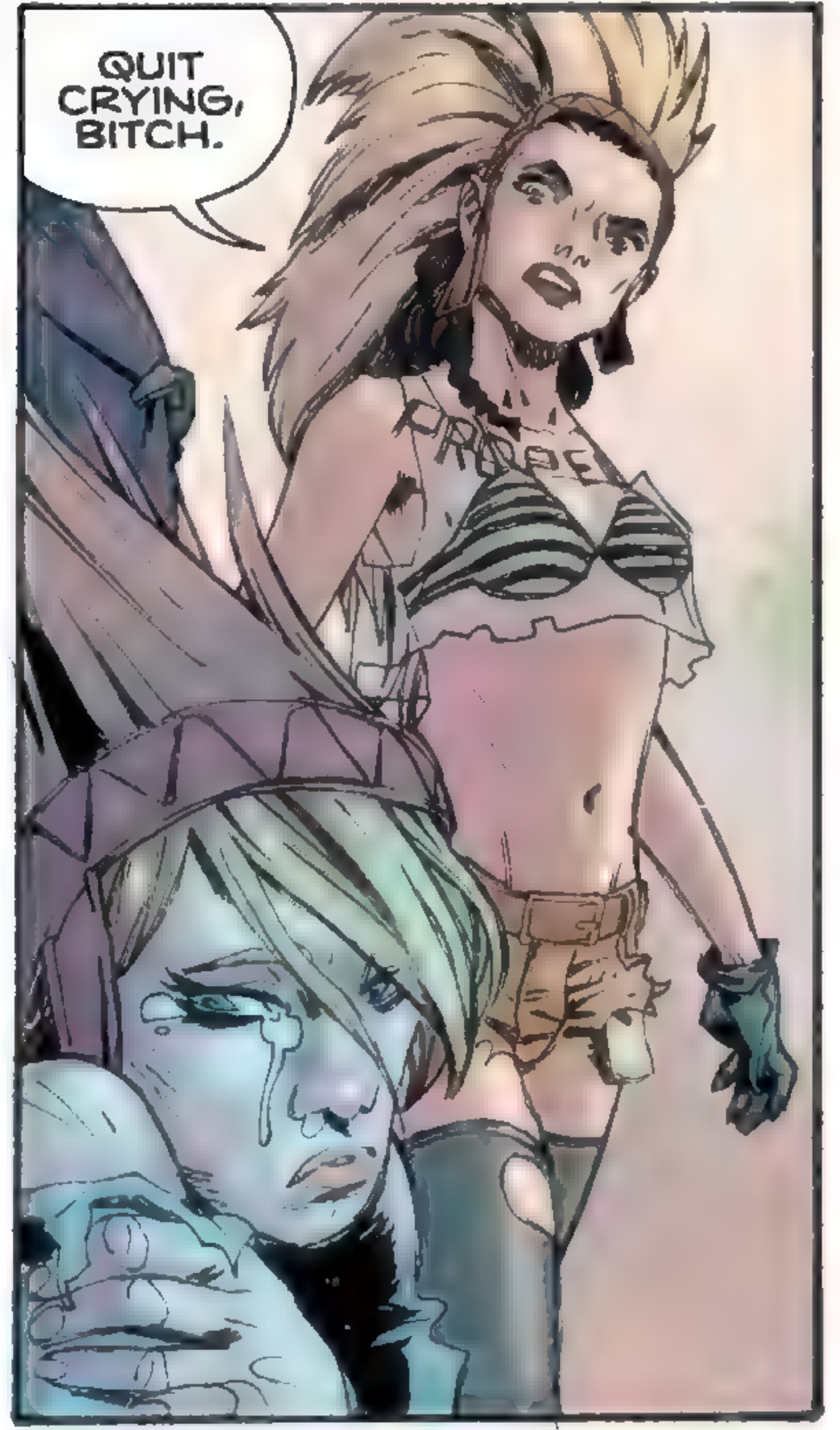
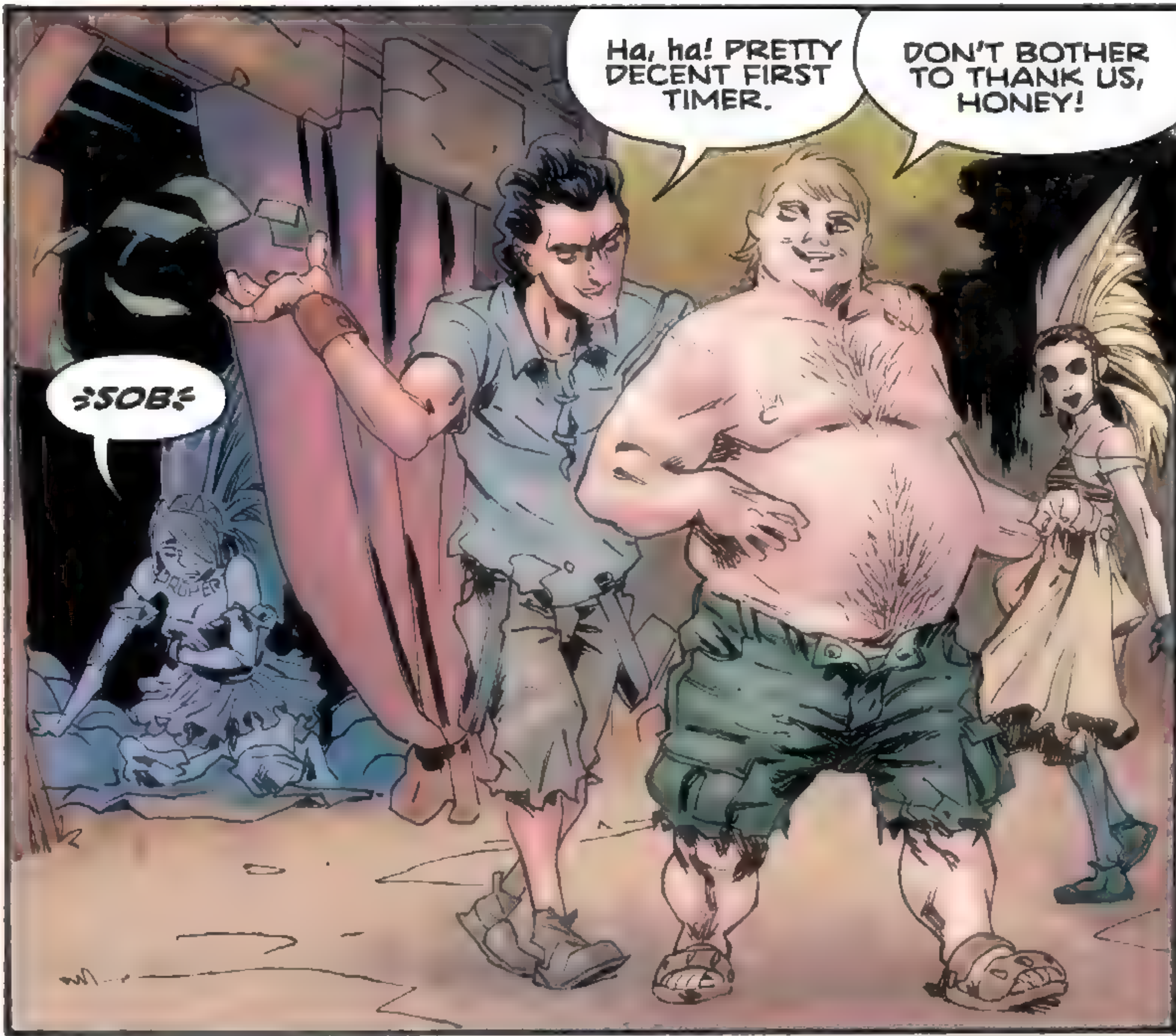


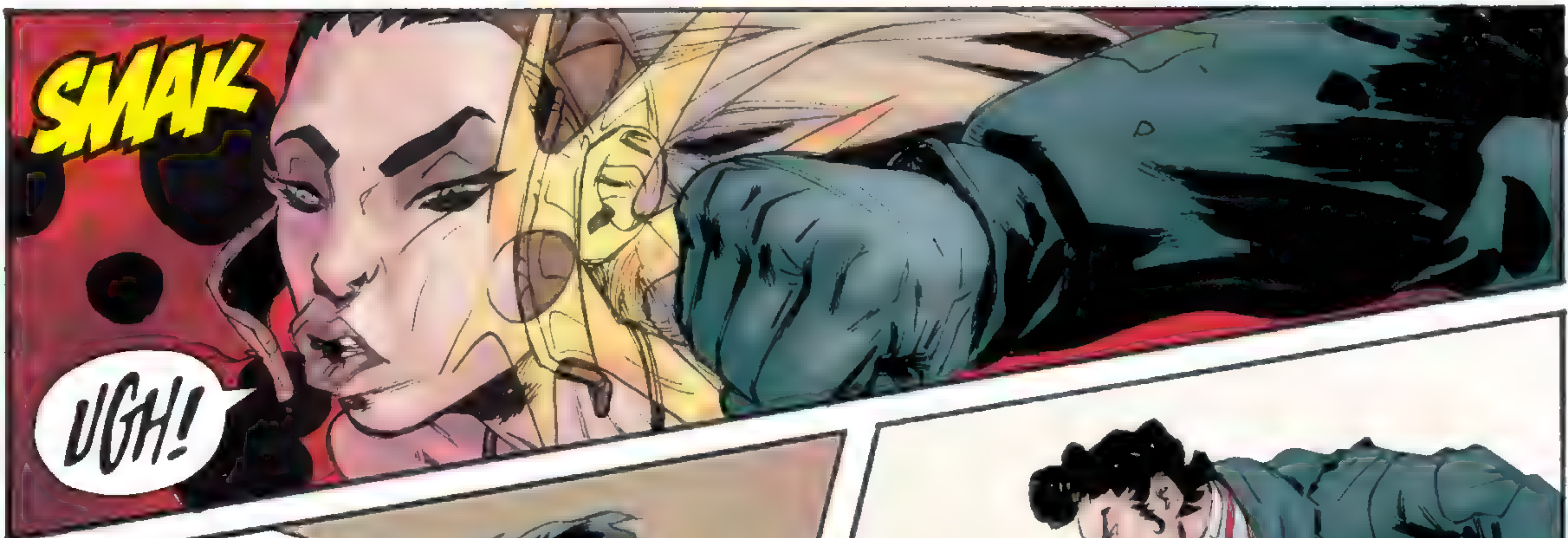












UGH!



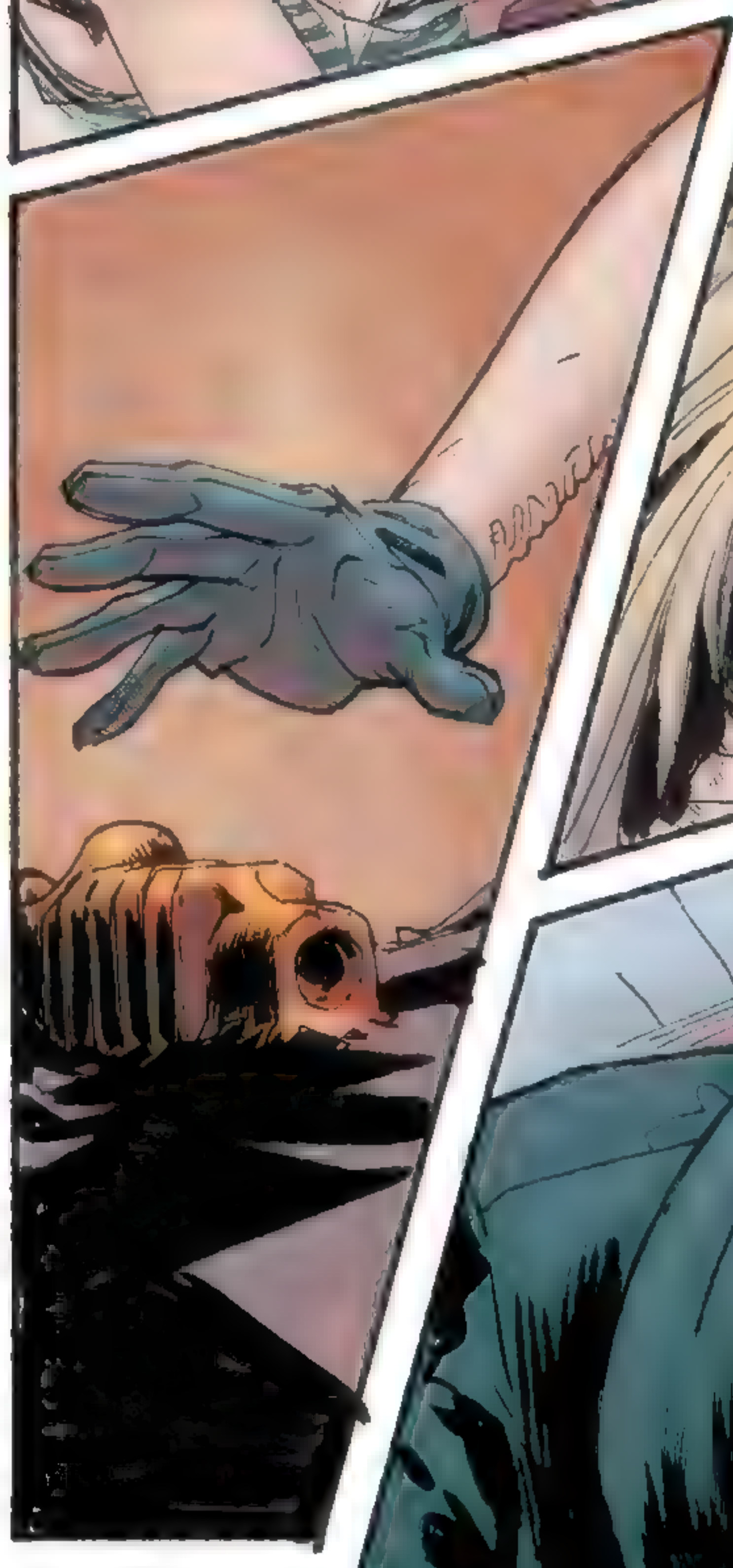
YOU'RE NOT AS CLEVER AS YOU THINK YOU ARE, YOU STINKING VALK!!

I KNOW YOU'VE BEEN STEALING FROM ME TO FEED YOUR PATHETIC FAMILY!



UNFORGIVABLE.

UGH!



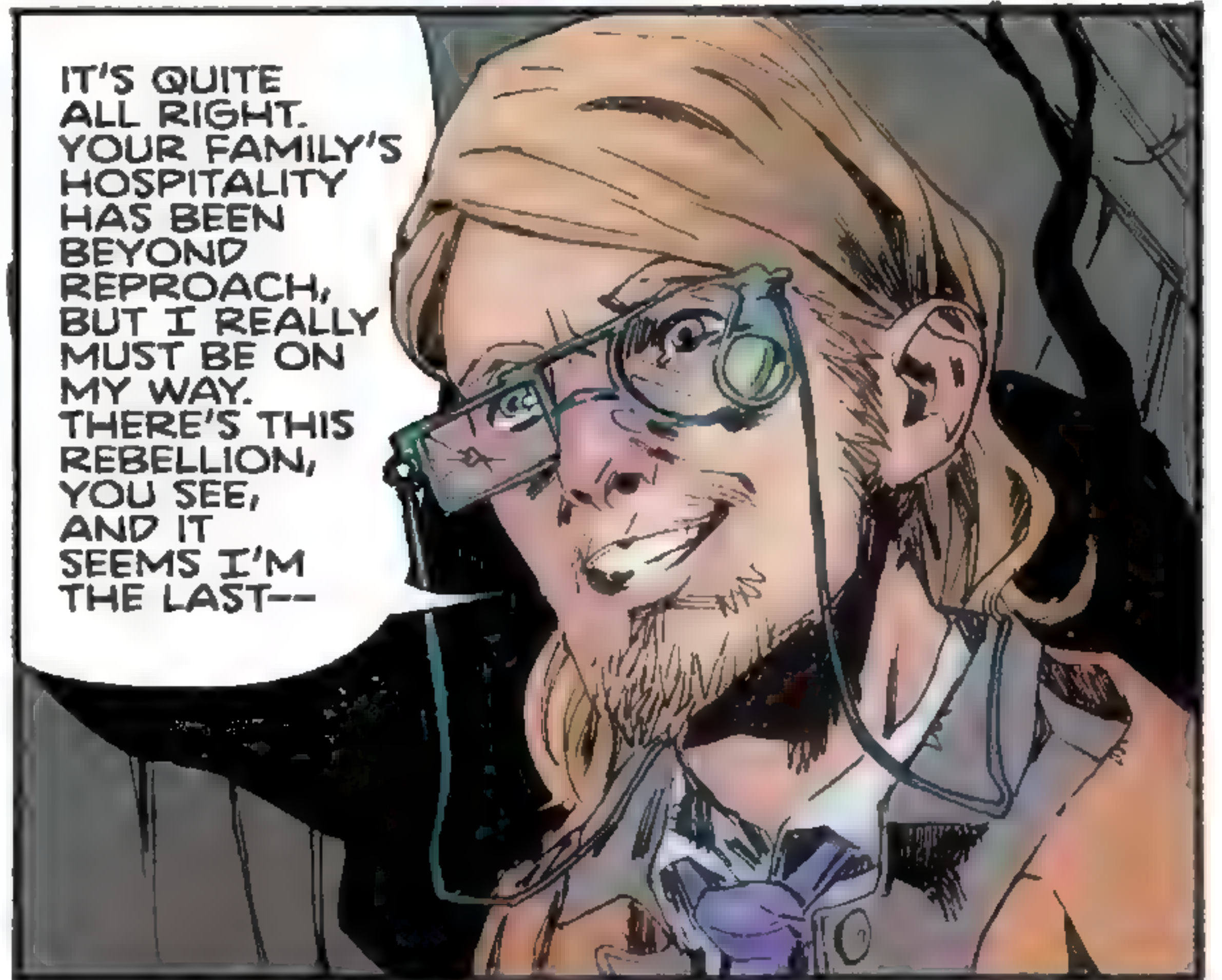
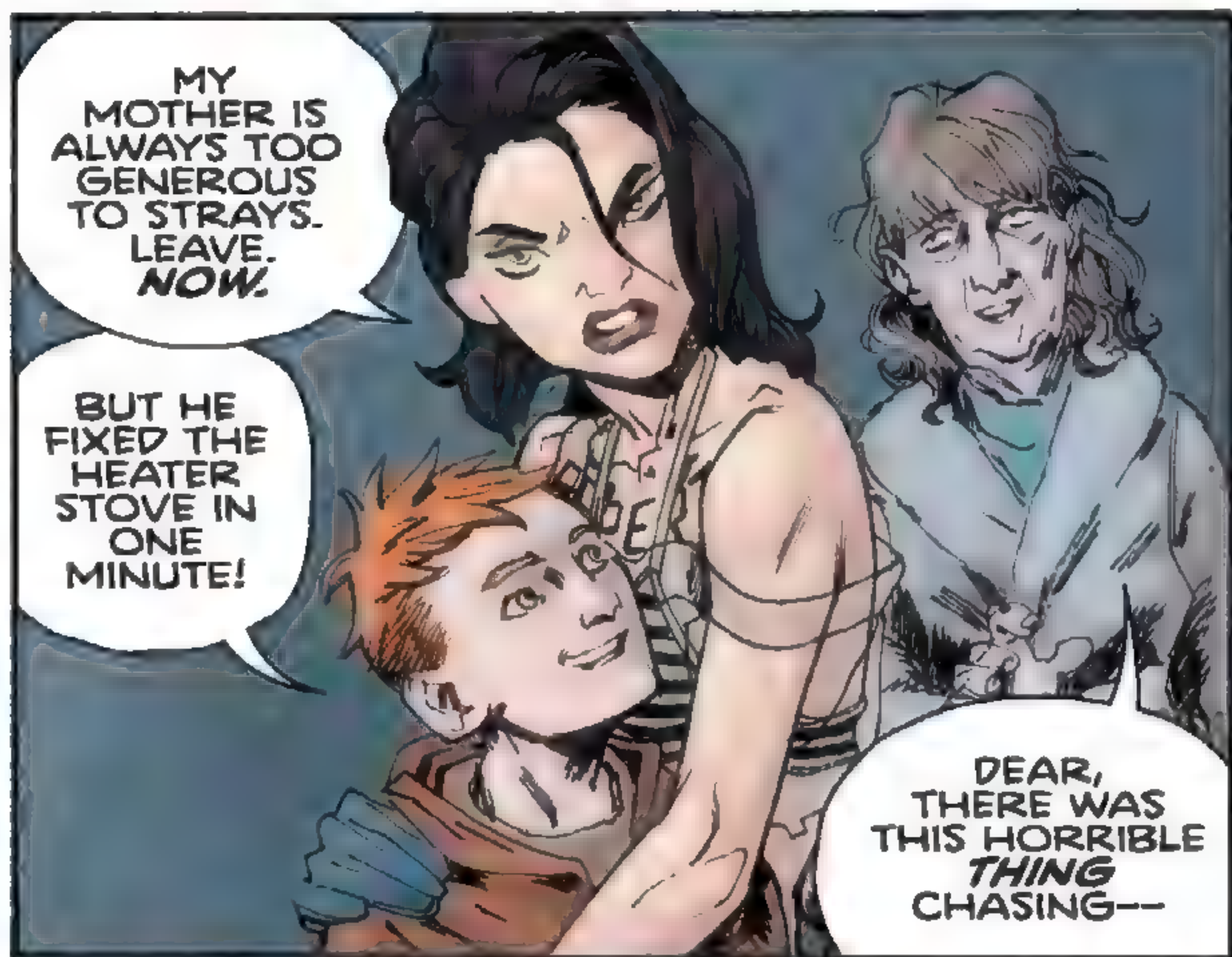
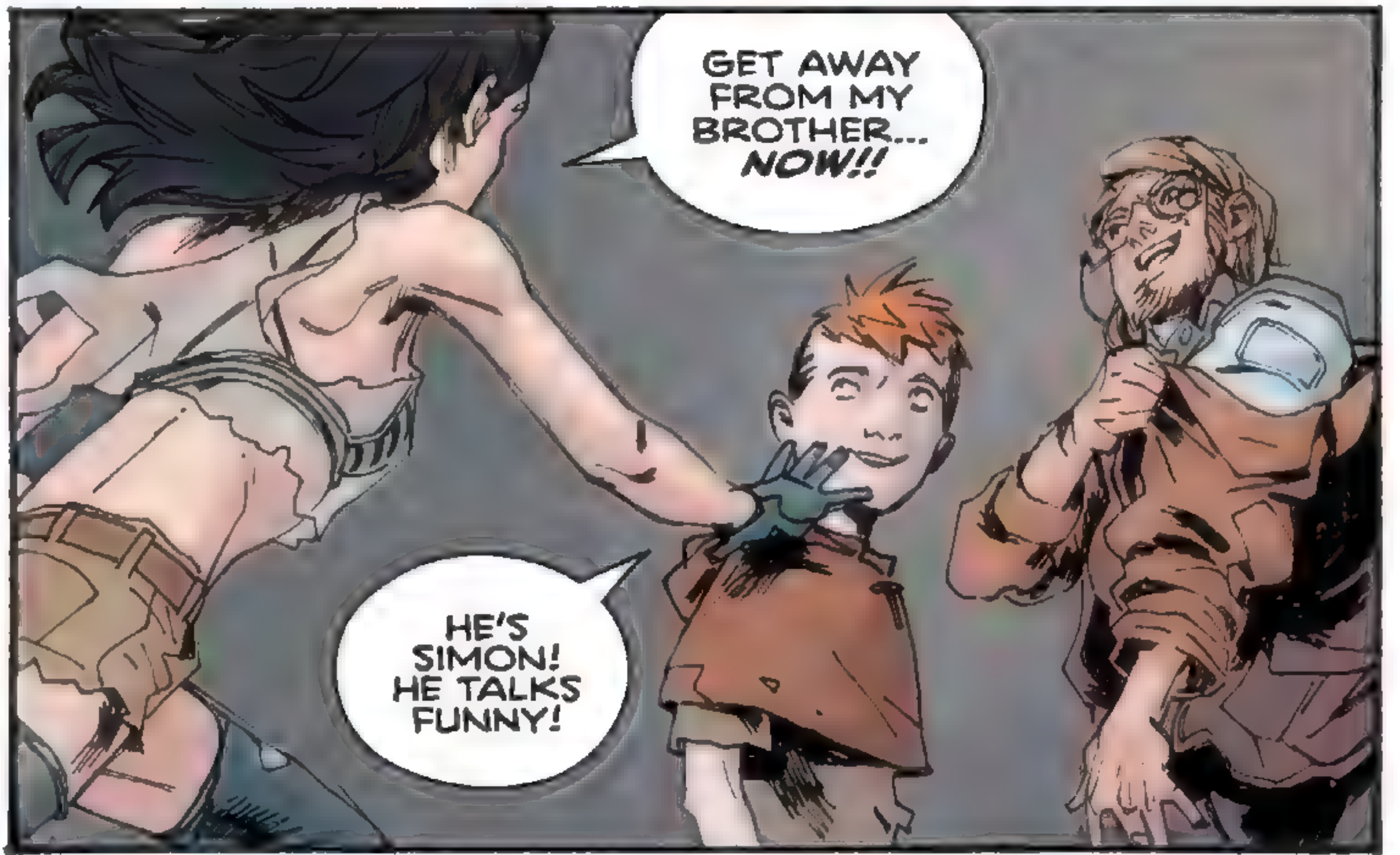
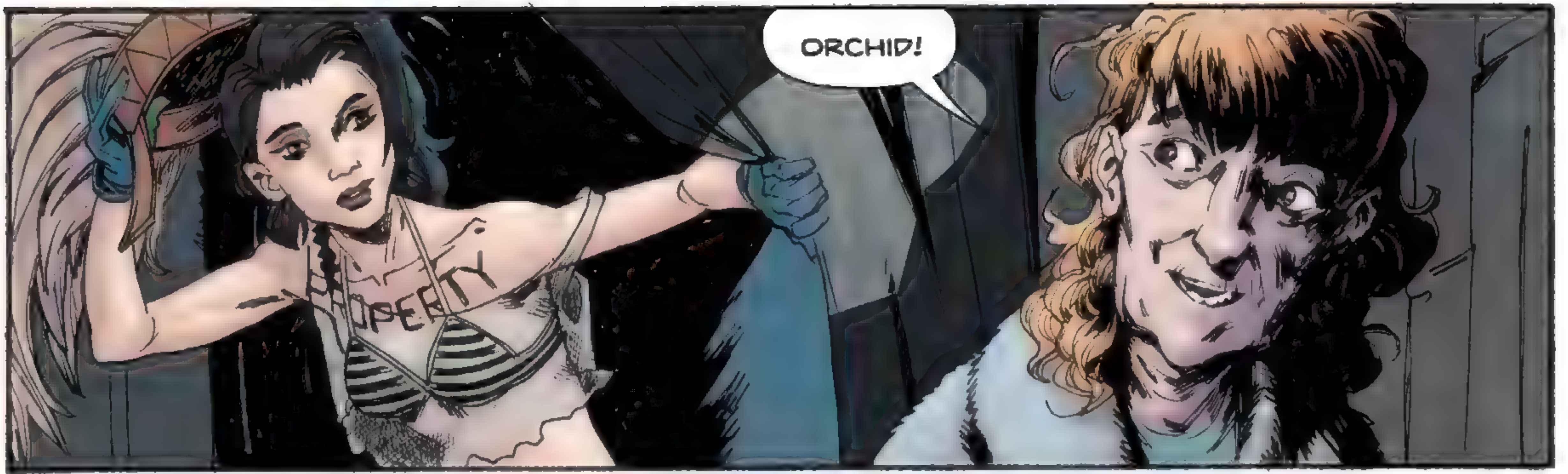
ENOUGH!!

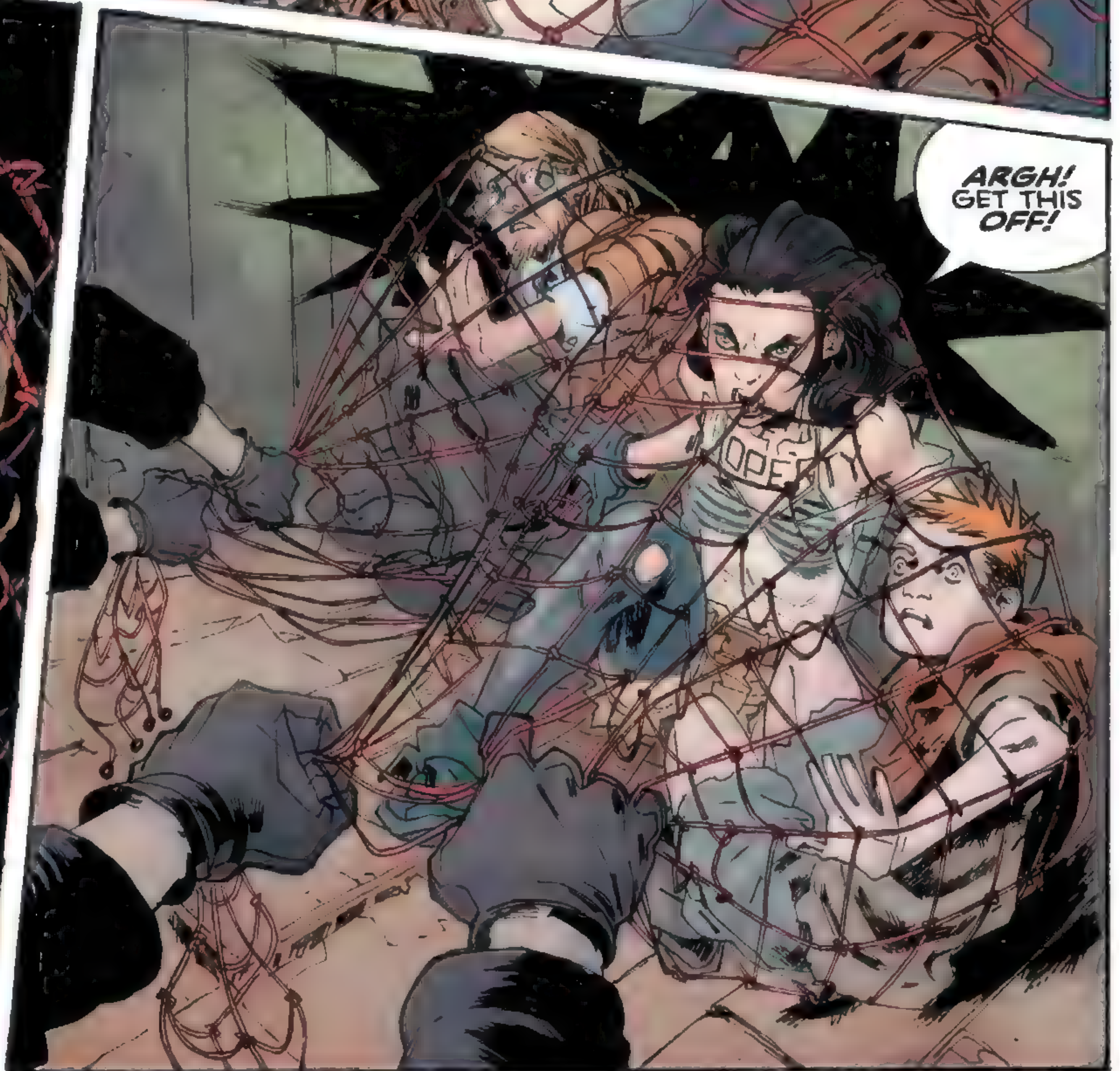
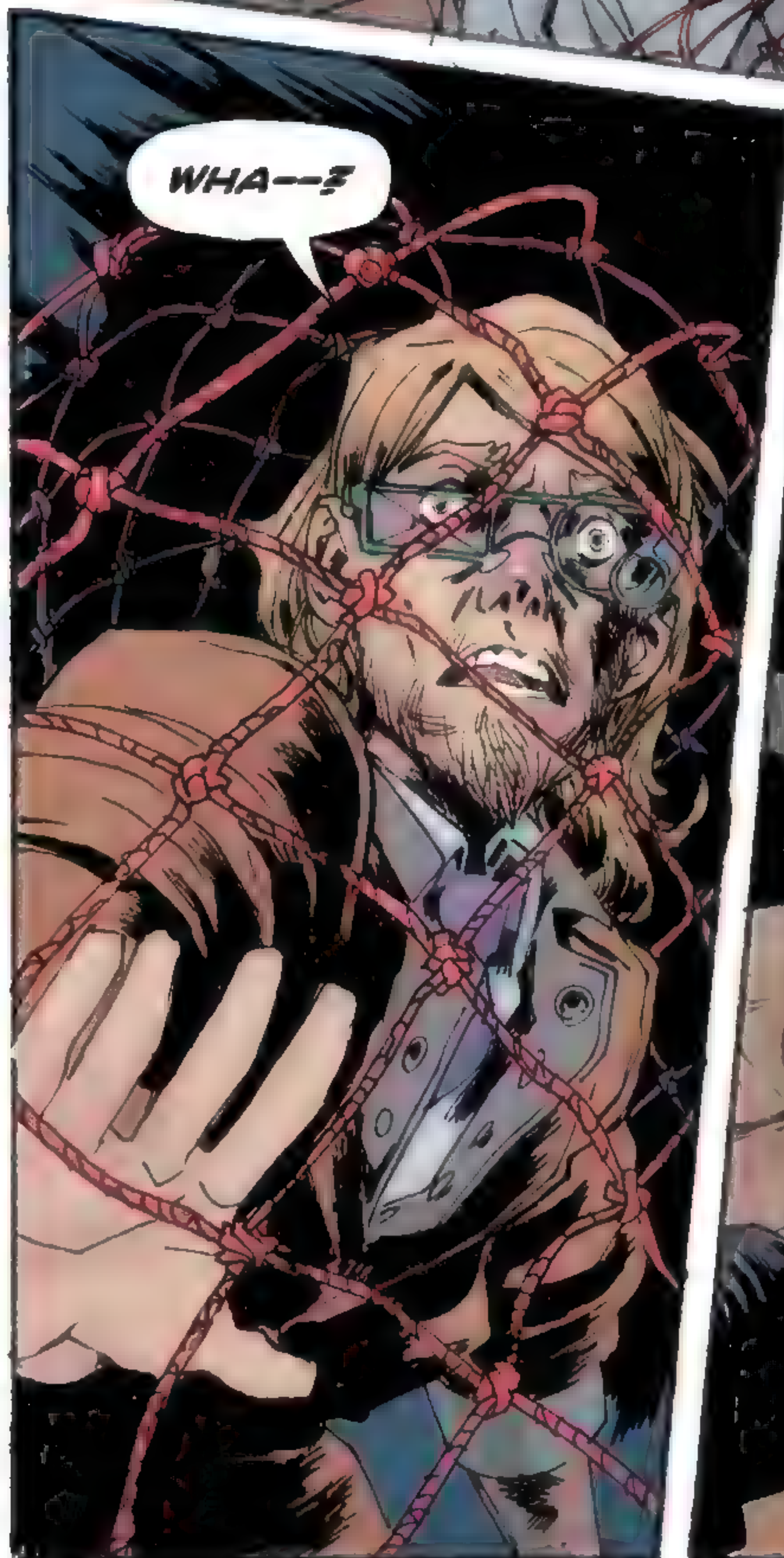
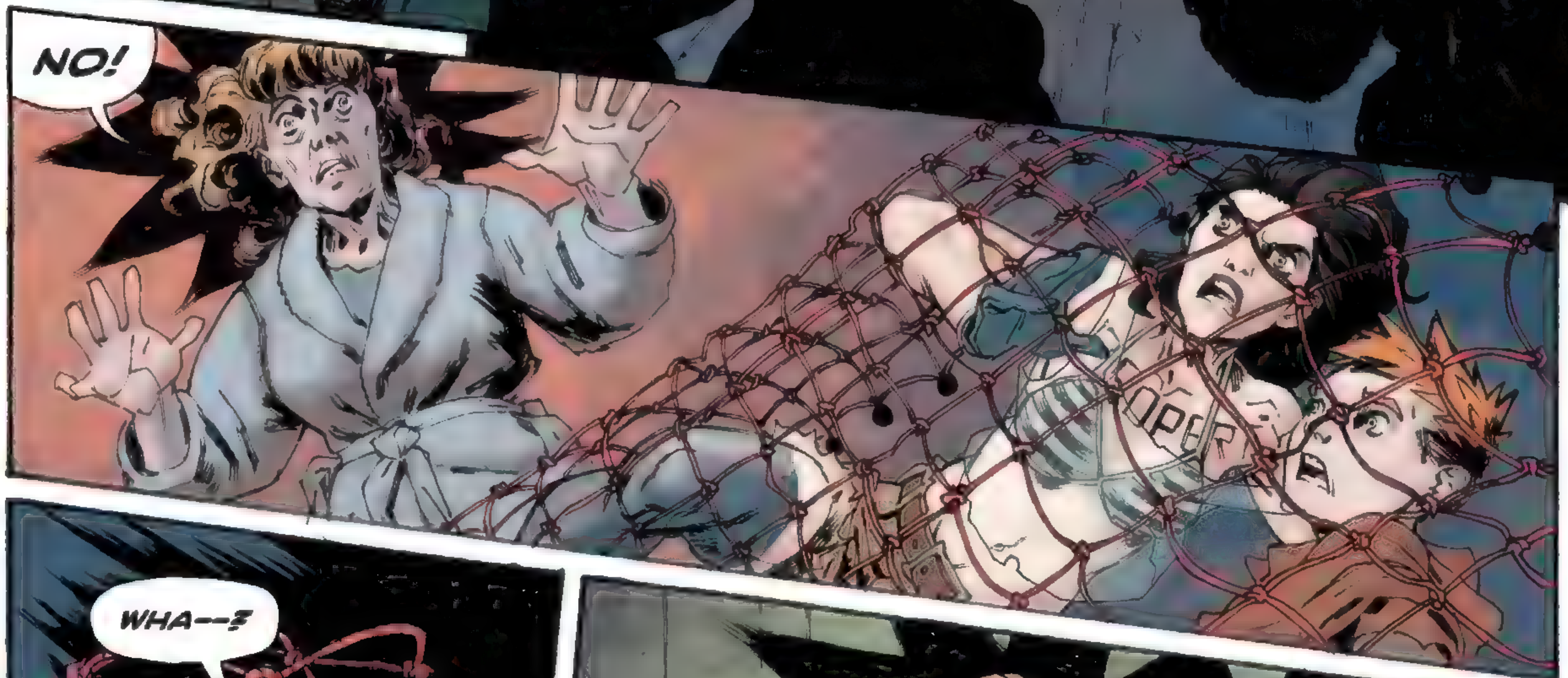
KRUNCH

AHH!

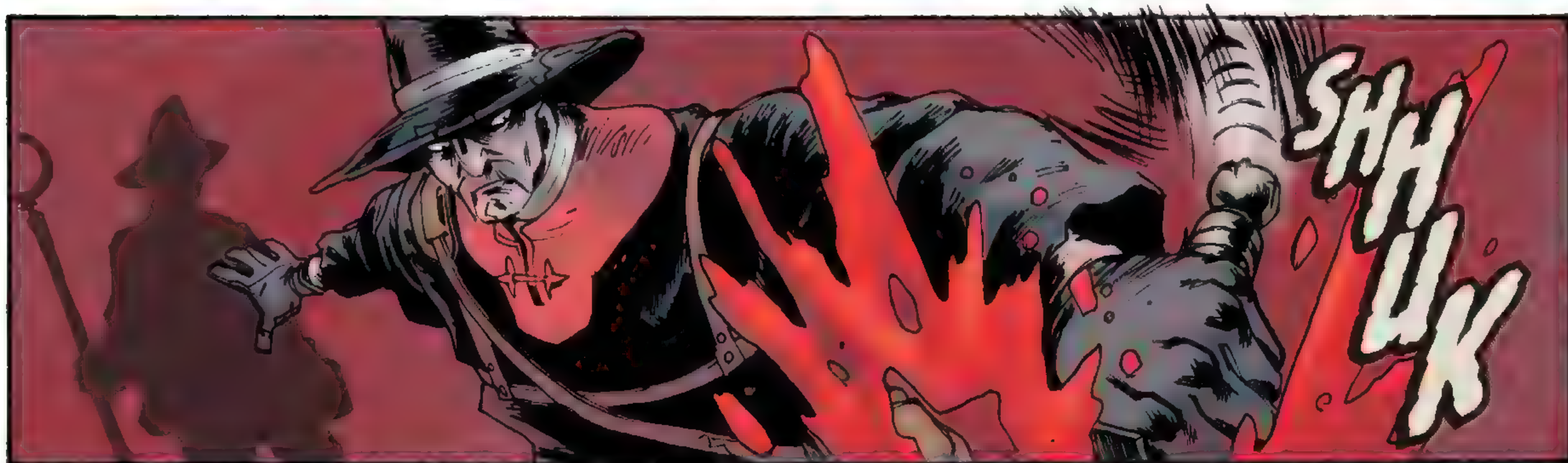


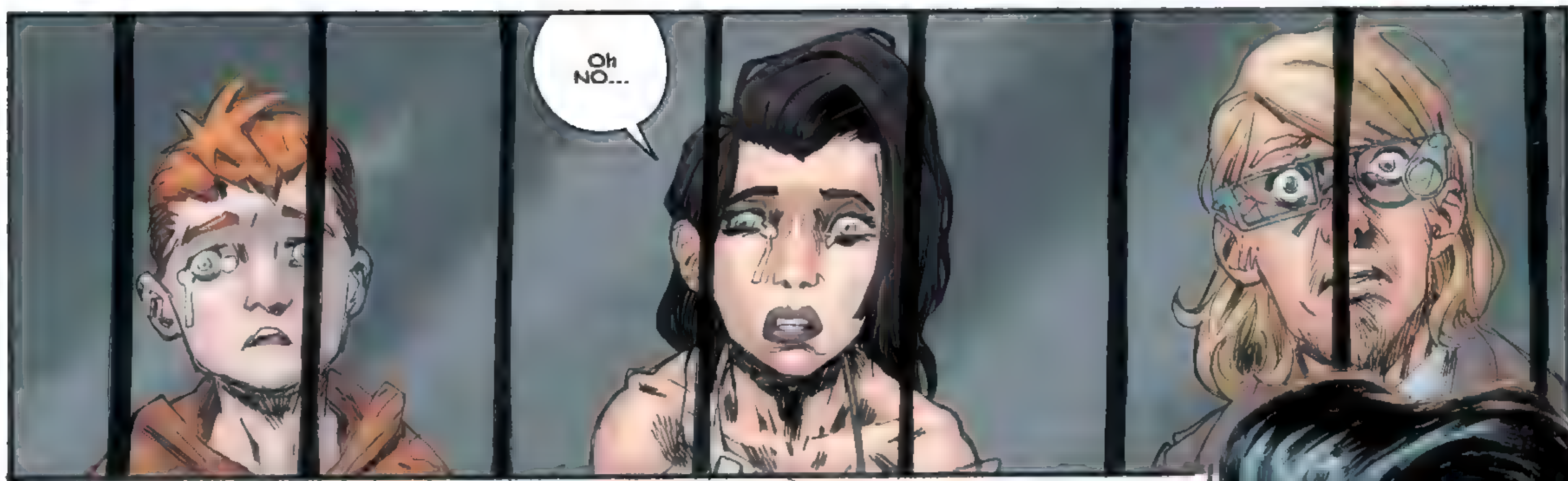
YOU'LL PAY FOR THIS, BRIDGE WHORE! AND BELIEVE ME, I'M GONNA GET MY MONEY!!









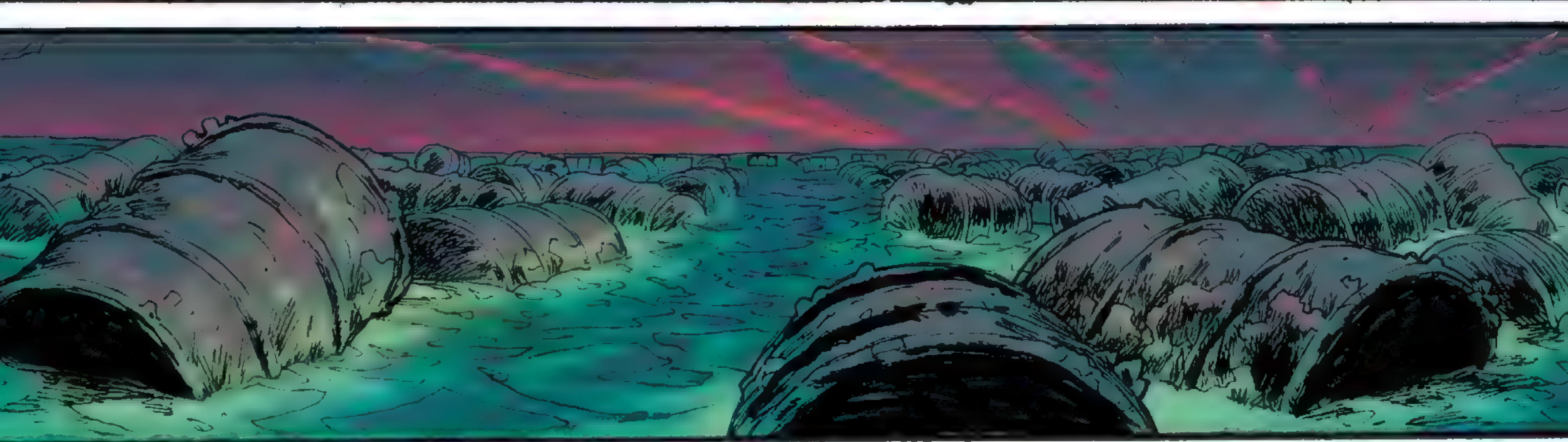




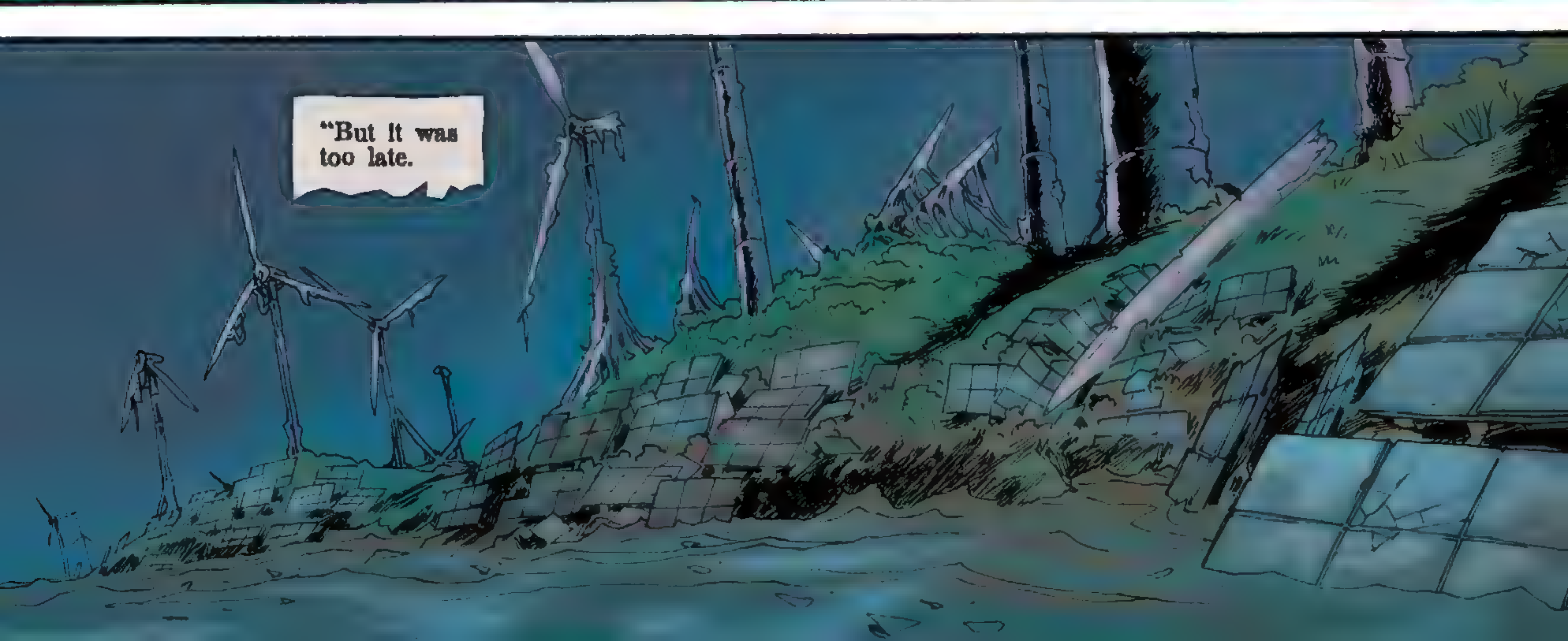


CENTURIES AGO.

"As the waters continued to rise, nations abandoned fossil fuels."



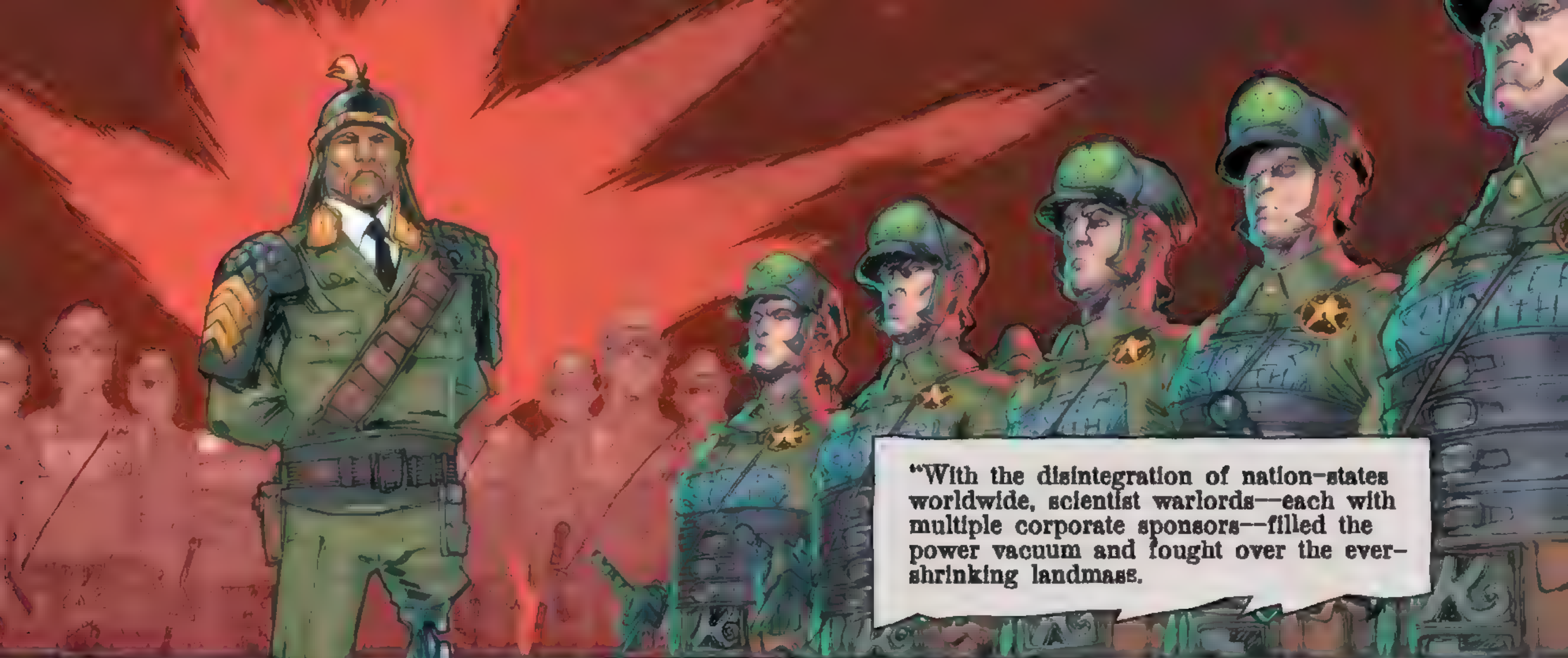
"But it was too late."





"Amidst the deluge, the planet's elite claimed the ever-shrinking high ground and gathered the remaining technology."

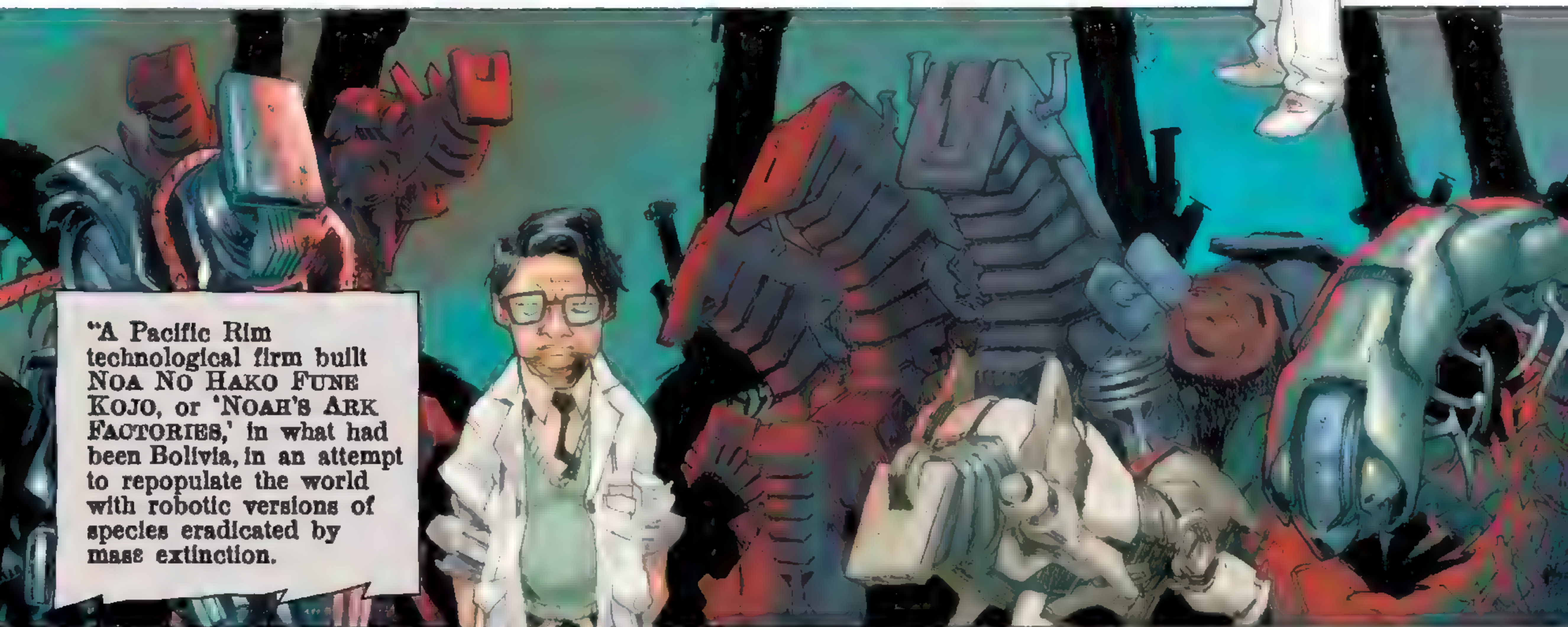




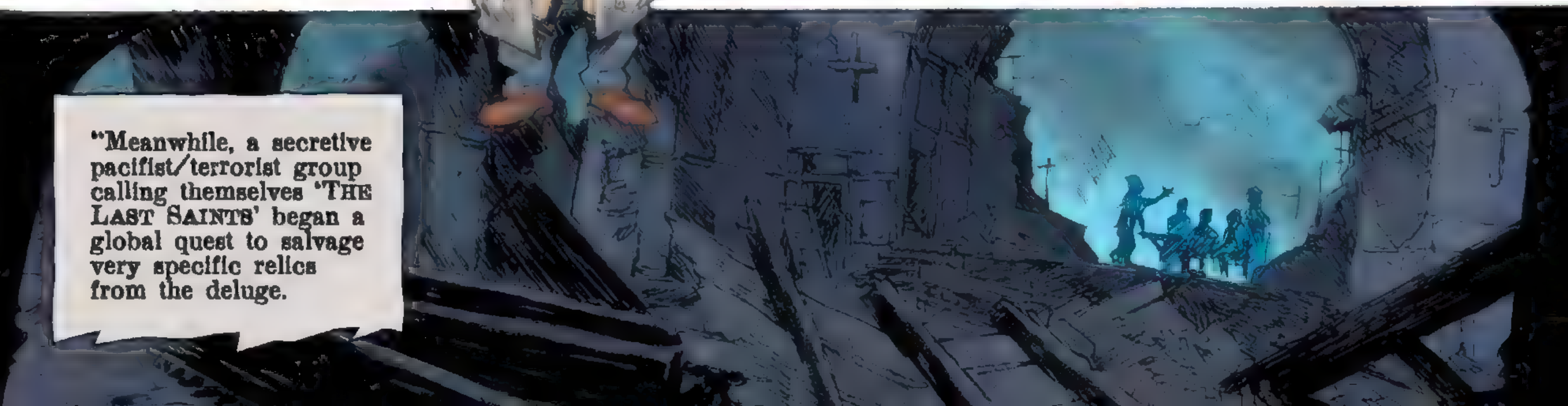
"With the disintegration of nation-states worldwide, scientist warlords—each with multiple corporate sponsors—filled the power vacuum and fought over the ever-shrinking landmass.



"New technologies were developed to fight in the new climate.



"A Pacific Rim technological firm built NOA NO HAKO FUNE KOJO, or 'NOAH'S ARK FACTORIES,' in what had been Bolivia, in an attempt to repopulate the world with robotic versions of species eradicated by mass extinction.



"Meanwhile, a secretive pacifist/terrorist group calling themselves 'THE LAST SAINTS' began a global quest to salvage very specific relics from the deluge.

"But it was all for naught. The rising tide spared no ground.

"All that was left of humanity was set adrift on the Cannibal Barges—huge derelict oil tankers, river barges, and rotting cruise ships...



"...filled with thousands of those savage, cunning, or (un)lucky enough to get onboard.

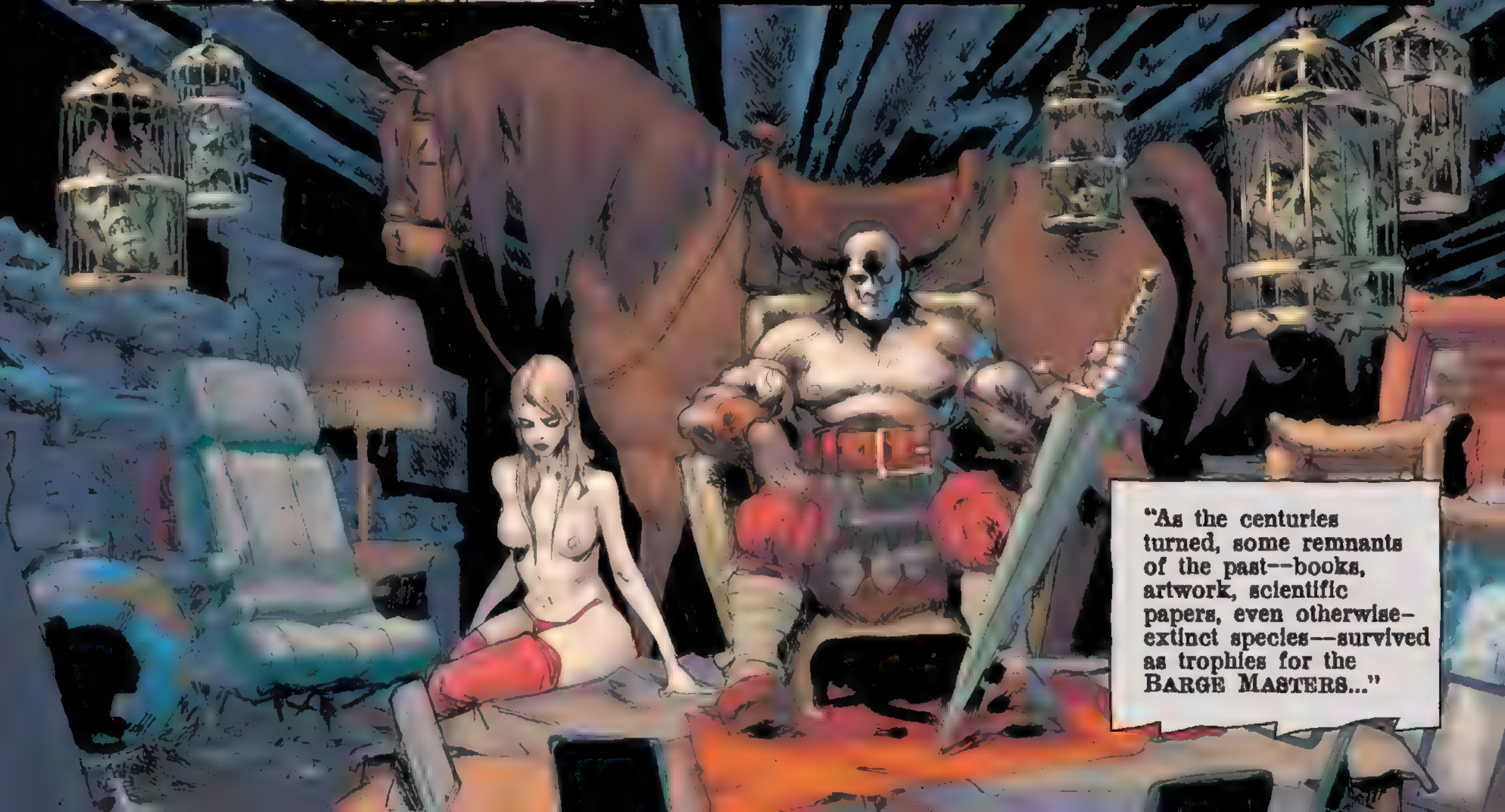


"All cursed to drift the high seas for generations...

"...and with little food available they resorted to extreme measures for sustenance.



"As the centuries turned, some remnants of the past—books, artwork, scientific papers, even otherwise-extinct species—survived as trophies for the BARGE MASTERS..."



PRESENT DAY.
ISCARIOT SLAVE CAMP.

"...and then, as now,
survival of the cruelest
was the sum of the law."

≡Sob≡
I WANT
MAMA...

HUSH,
YEHZU. MAMA'S
GONE. IT'S JUST
US NOW.

I'LL
PROTECT
YOU, LITTLE
BROTHER.

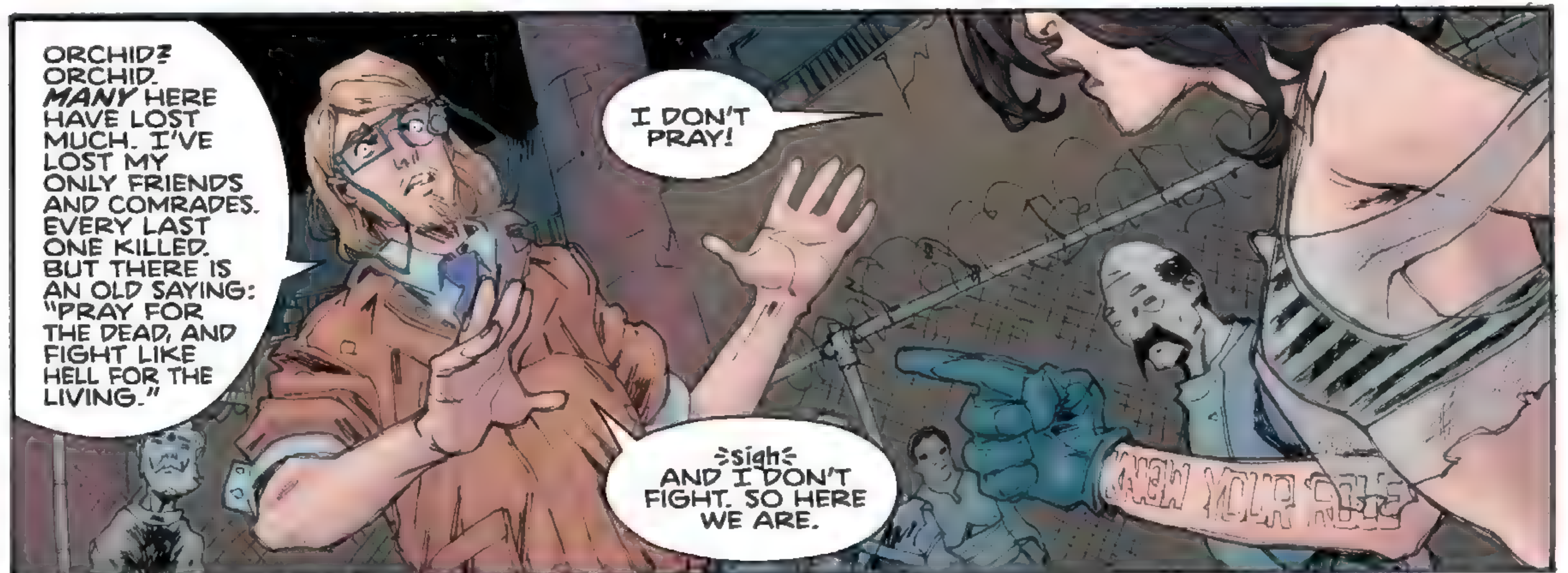
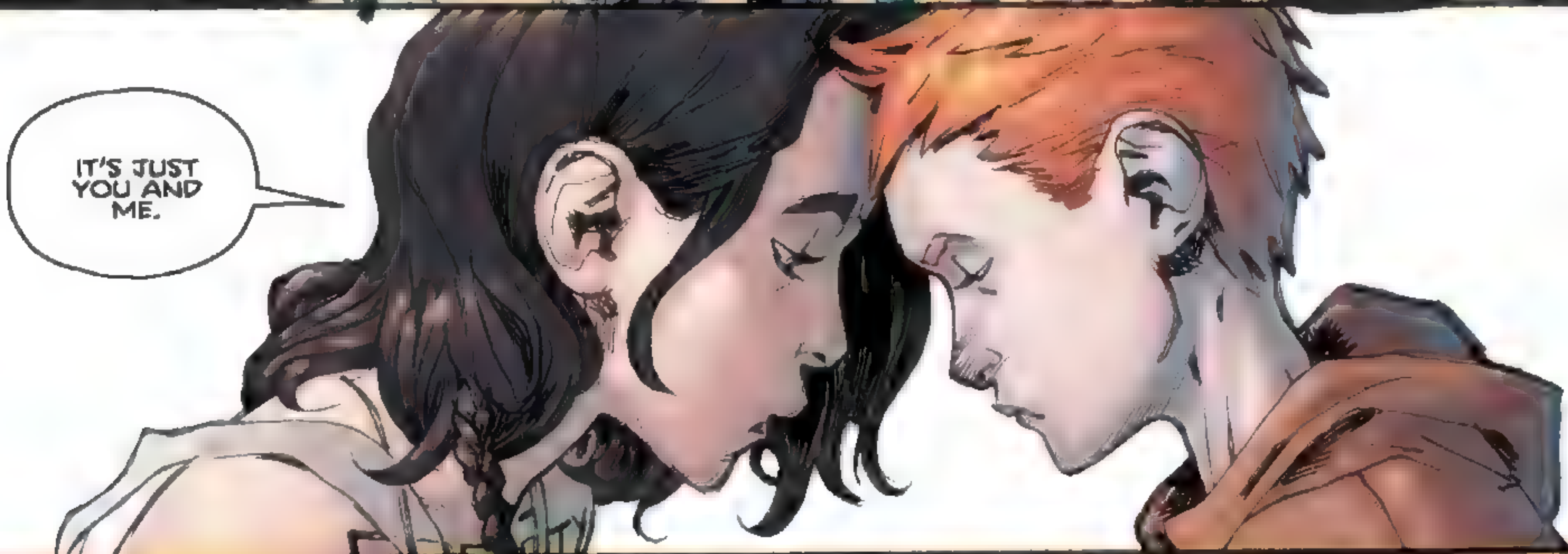
≡Sob≡

I'LL
PROTECT
YOU.
ALWAYS.

AT LEAST
WE NO LONGER
HAVE TO LISTEN
TO THAT...

...CRAZY
MAN.

...AND,
WELL, IT'S
CHEAPER
FOR THEM
TO REPLACE
A DEAD SLAVE
WITH A LIVE
ONE THAN IT
IS FOR THEM
TO IMPROVE
OUR WRETCHED
AND DANGEROUS
CONDITIONS,
YOU SEE?





AND WHAT'S "OLD SAYINGS"? WHY DO YOU TALK LIKE THAT? YOU'RE A FOOL AND YOUR WORDS ARE UGLY! YOU'RE UGLY!

I ADMIT I WILL NEVER DIE FROM A SURPLUS OF BEAUTY. BUT I WAS A SLAVE ONCE BEFORE. NOT HERE IN THE PITS, BUT IN THE R.S.C., ROBOTICS SLAVE CORPS, YOU SEE?

I GAINED... CERTAIN **ABILITIES** AND HAD ACCESS TO WHAT ARE CALLED... READING MATERIALS, "BOOKS," YOU SEE? THEY--

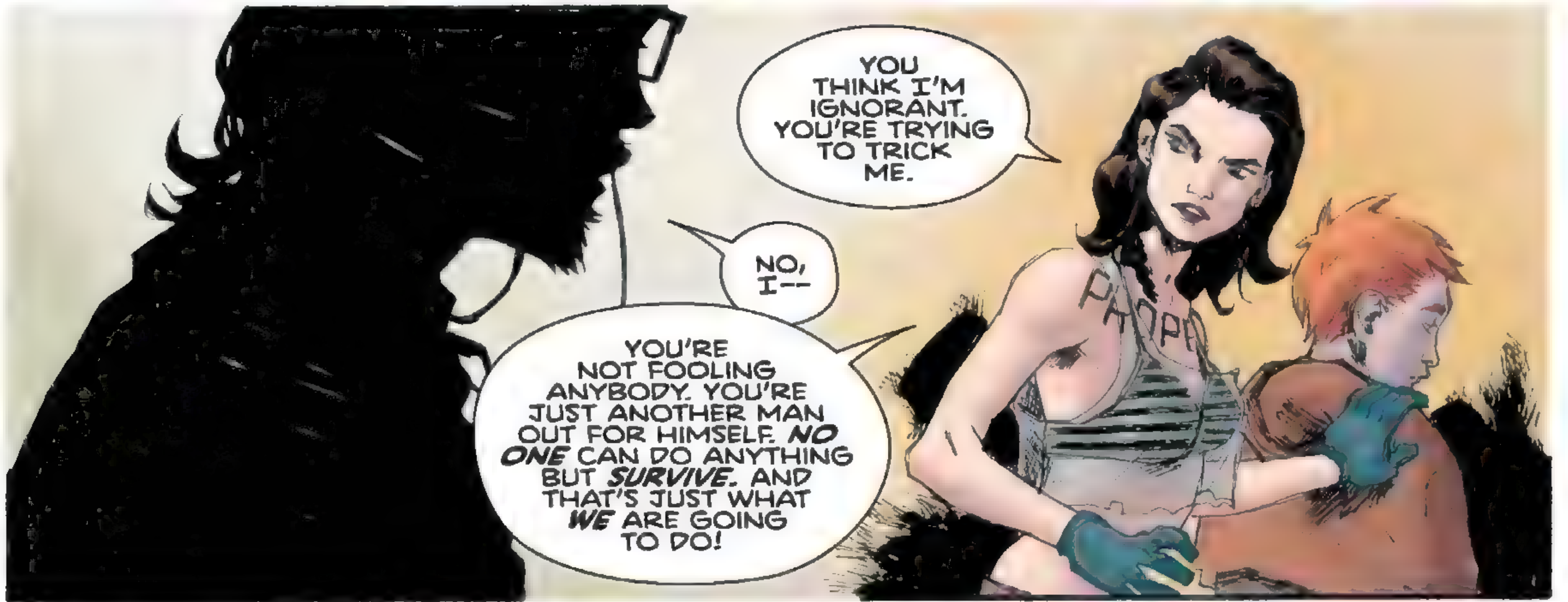
YOU DON'T HAVE THE "ABILITY" TO **STOP TALKING!** NEARLY **EVERY SINGLE WORD** OUT OF YOUR MOUTH SOUNDS STUPID!



WHAT ABOUT THE REST?

Huh? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

WHAT ABOUT THE THINGS I SAY THAT DON'T SOUND STUPID?



YOU THINK I'M IGNORANT. YOU'RE TRYING TO TRICK ME.

NO, I--

YOU'RE NOT FOOLING ANYBODY. YOU'RE JUST ANOTHER MAN OUT FOR HIMSELF. **NO ONE** CAN DO ANYTHING BUT **SURVIVE**. AND THAT'S JUST WHAT **WE** ARE GOING TO DO!

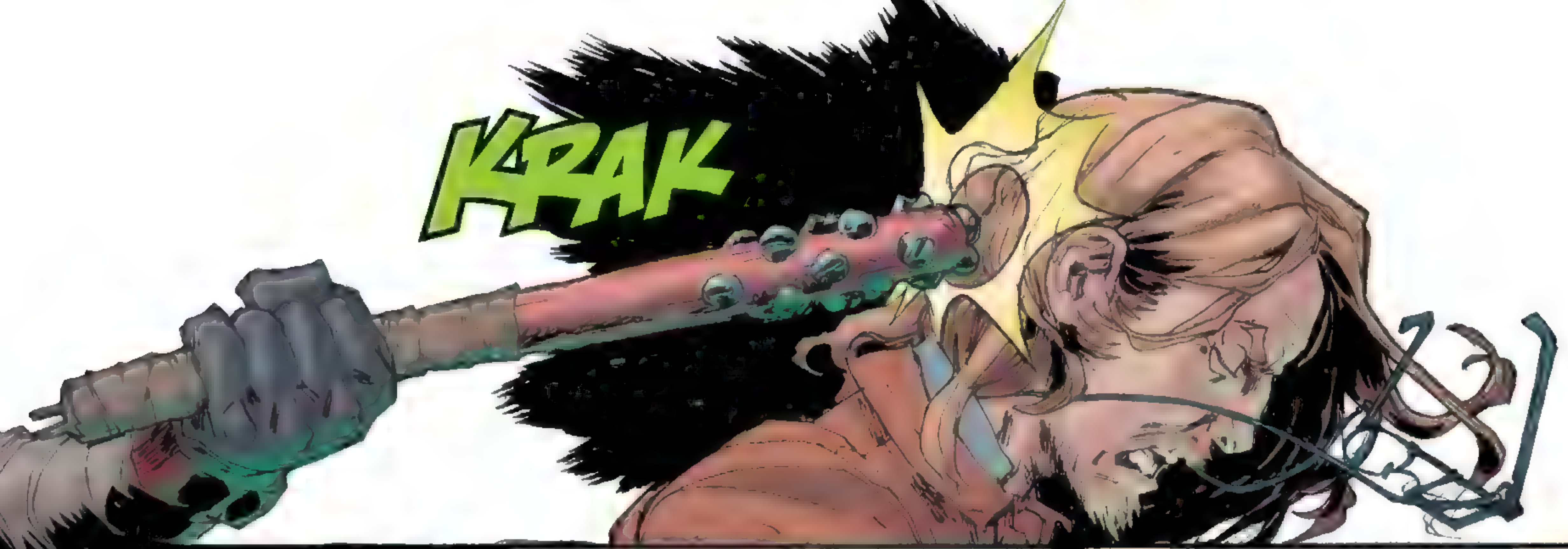


WAIT. PLEASE. MY FRIEND ANZIO TAUGHT US... SHOWED ME... WHEN THE SHADOW REBELS...

OKAY, I'M QUITE USELESS IN A FIGHT... BUT WHEN ANZIO STRUCK BACK AT THE SOLDIERS, WHEN WE ROBBED THE CARAVANS...

YOU SEE, I WAS CONVINCED IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO INFLICT HARM ON THOSE MURDERING BASTARDS... UNTIL WE DID.

DESPITE OUR LOSSES, DESPITE ANZIO'S DEATH, SYMBOLICALLY WE--



SPEAK OF THE
"SHADOW REBEL"
TERRORISTS AGAIN,
BRIDGE SCUM, AND
I'LL "SYMBOLICALLY"
STOMP A HOLE IN
YOUR MISERABLE
FACE!



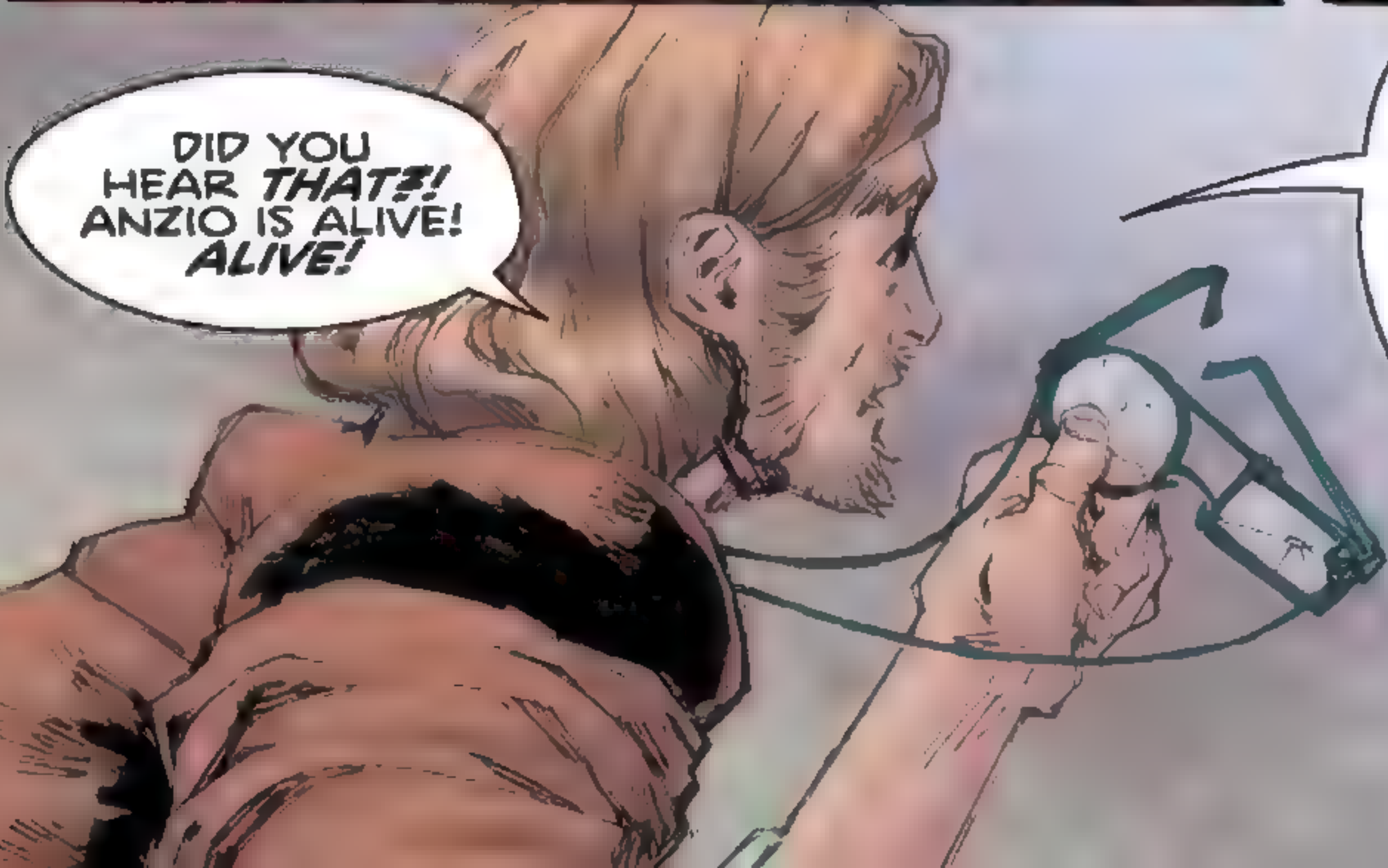
THE TRAITOR, YOUR
BELOVED "ANZIO,"
HAS AT LAST BEEN
CAPTURED AND WILL
BE **EXECUTED** ON
FINAL VICTORY
DAY ON THE
NEXT FULL
MOON!



YES, THE LEADER OF THE
SO-CALLED "REBELLION"
WILL DIE IN STADIA
PENUEL ON THE
ANNIVERSARY OF
THE DEATH OF
GENERAL CHINA!
A FITTING END,
NO?

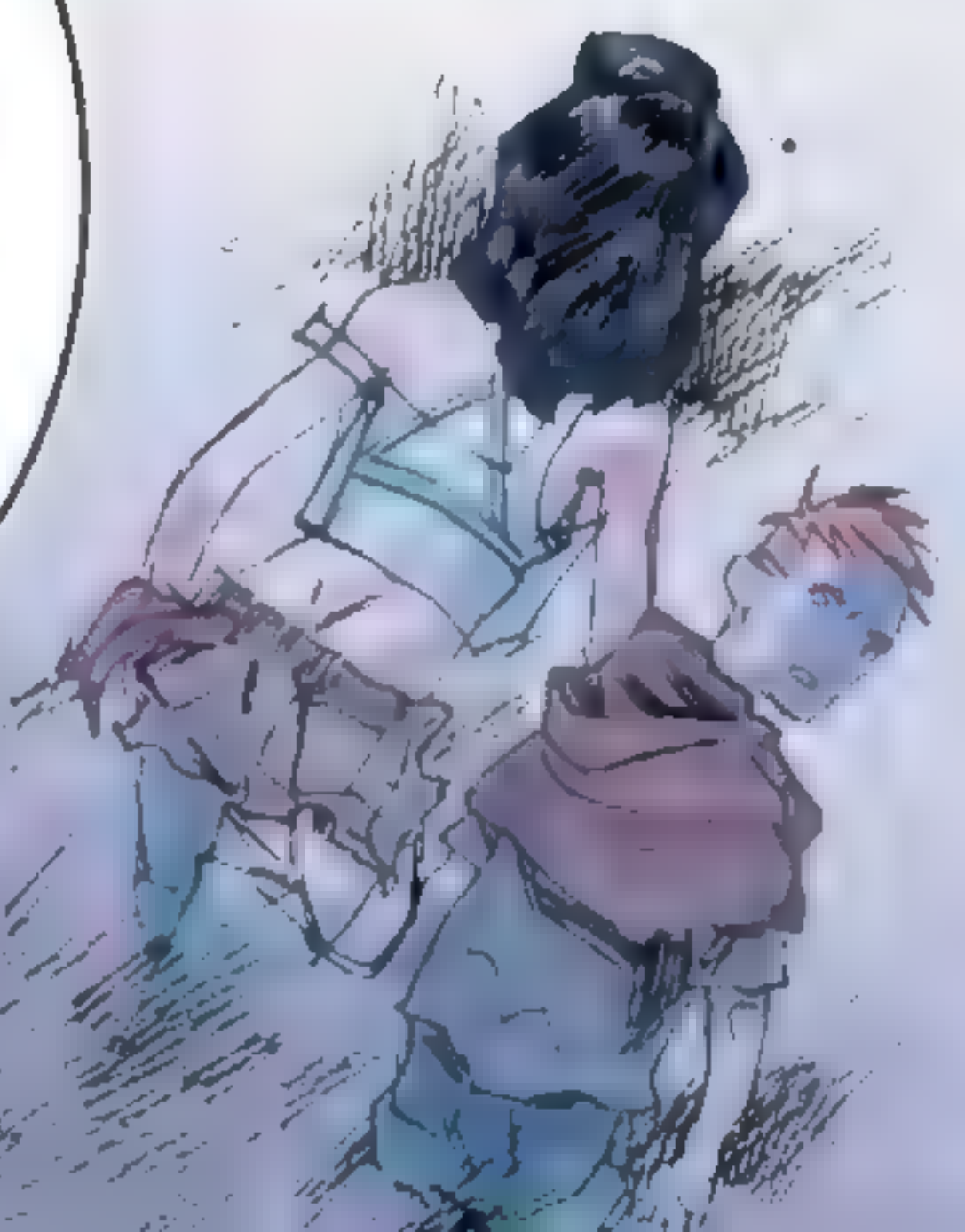


FILTH. ONE DAY
WE'LL ERASE THE
STAIN OF THESE
BRIDGE PEOPLE
PERMANENTLY...



DID YOU
HEAR **THAT?! ANZIO IS ALIVE! ALIVE!**

Oh, WE MUST
ACT FAST! VERY
GOOD THEN, HERE'S
WHAT WE MUST DO---
OKAY, FIRST, WE
ESCAPE. THEN WE
SOMEHOW MAKE
OUR WAY INTO
FORTRESS PENUEL.
NOT AN EASY
TASK, BUT---



COME,
YEHZU. HE IS
UNWELL.

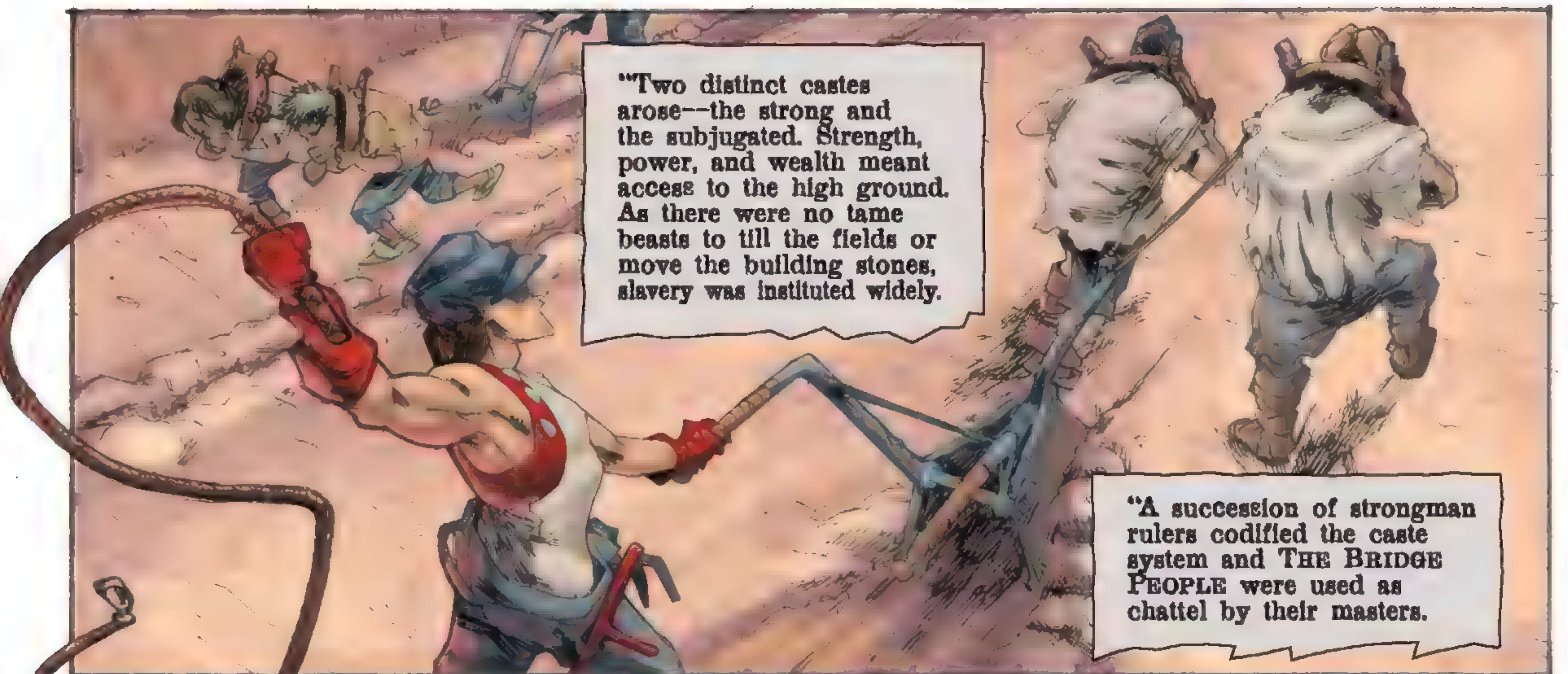
ORCHID,
WHY IS THERE
SO MUCH YELLING,
AND HITTING, AND
SLAVES?

I DON'T
KNOW, YEHZU.
I DON'T KNOW
AND I DON'T
CARE. WE'VE
JUST GOT TO
FIND A WAY
OUT OF
HERE.



"When the waters receded,
THE WILD covered all the
land. The newly emerging
species that filled the
evolutionary cracks shared
two characteristics—they
could not be domesticated
and they were extremely
hostile. Humans were no
longer atop the food chain.

"The remnants
of humanity hung
on by a thread.

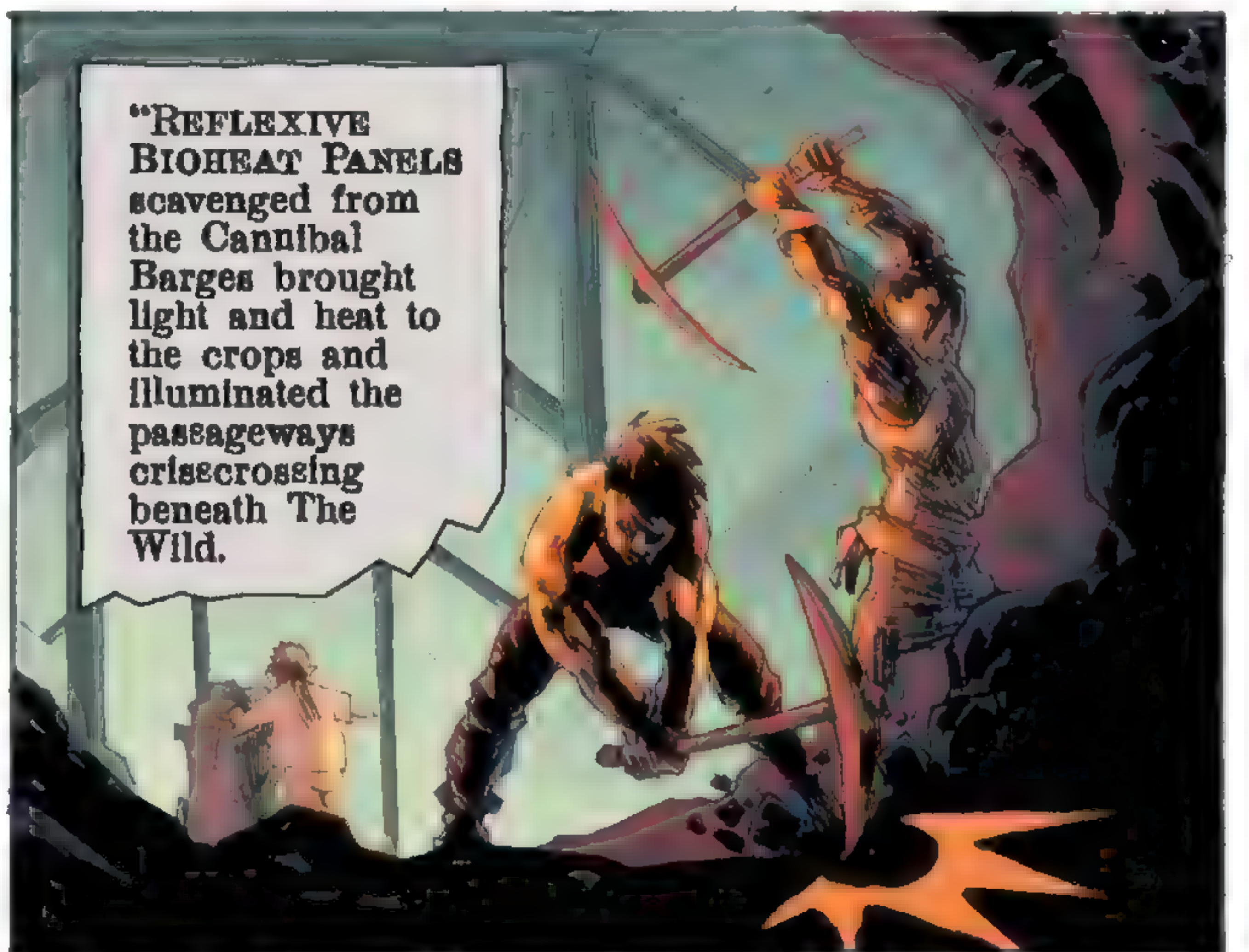


"Two distinct castes arose--the strong and the subjugated. Strength, power, and wealth meant access to the high ground. As there were no tame beasts to till the fields or move the building stones, slavery was instituted widely.

"A succession of strongman rulers codified the caste system and THE BRIDGE PEOPLE were used as chattel by their masters.



"A vast underground labyrinth of tunnels and cavernous 'harvest spaces' was excavated to provide a measure of safety from The Wild.



"REFLEXIVE BIOHEAT PANELS scavenged from the Cannibal Barges brought light and heat to the crops and illuminated the passageways crisscrossing beneath The Wild.

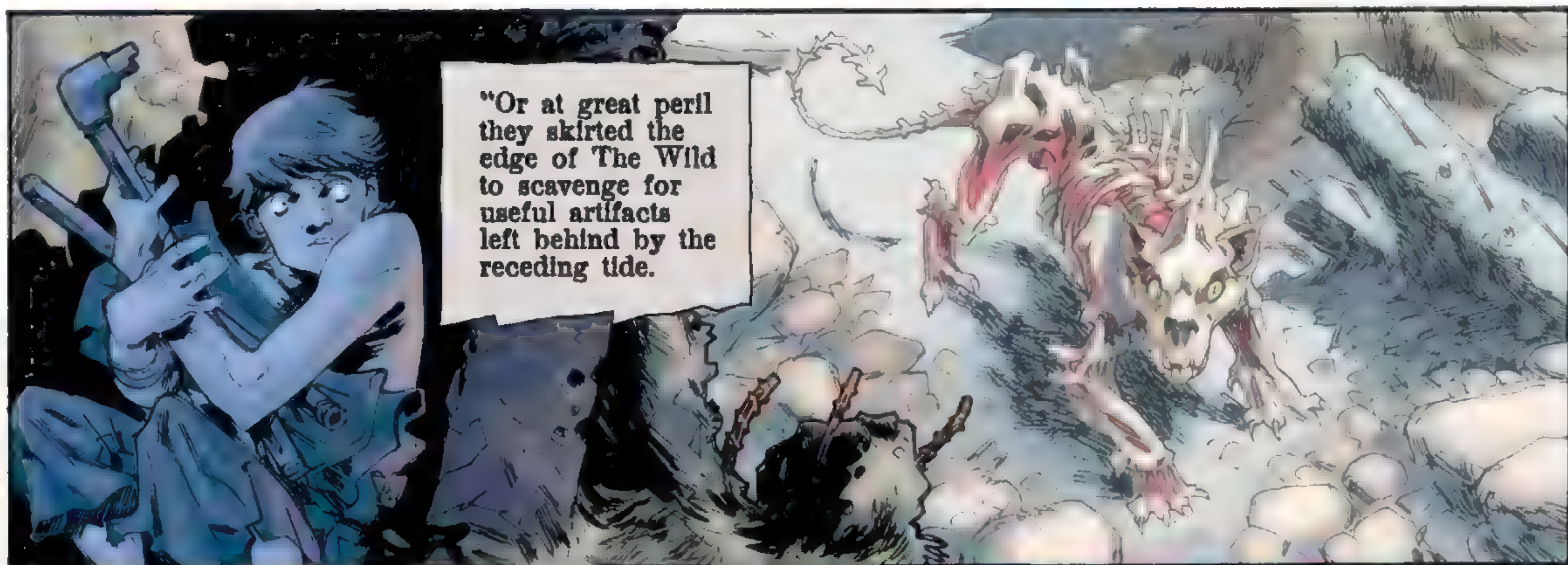


"Slaves displaying an aptitude with machinery or discovered to be of a more intellectual bent were recruited and trained by the Robotics Slave Corps.

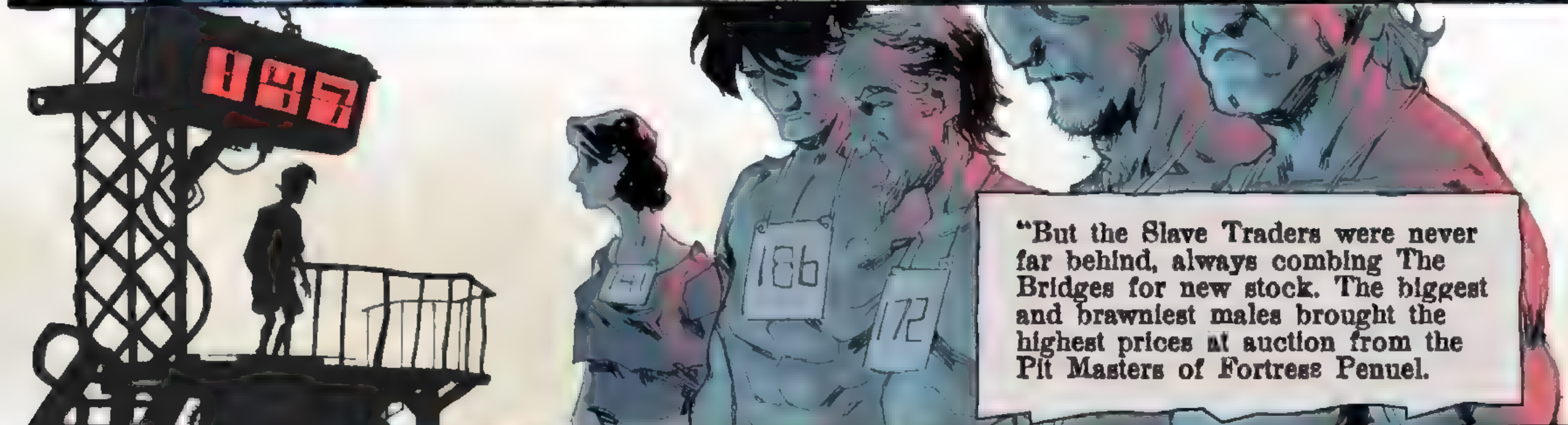
"The waterlogged, abandoned robotics factories of the ancient world were excavated and the technology put to use for new purposes.



"The Bridge People scratched out a meager existence harvesting the white leeches sold in the narcotics trade."



"Or at great peril they skirted the edge of The Wild to scavenge for useful artifacts left behind by the receding tide."



"But the Slave Traders were never far behind, always combing The Bridges for new stock. The biggest and brawnliest males brought the highest prices at auction from the Pit Masters of Fortress Pennel."



"The rest awaited their fate in the overcrowded wretchedness of the ISOARIOT SLAVE CAMP."



PRESENT DAY.

ISCARIOT SLAVE CAMP.

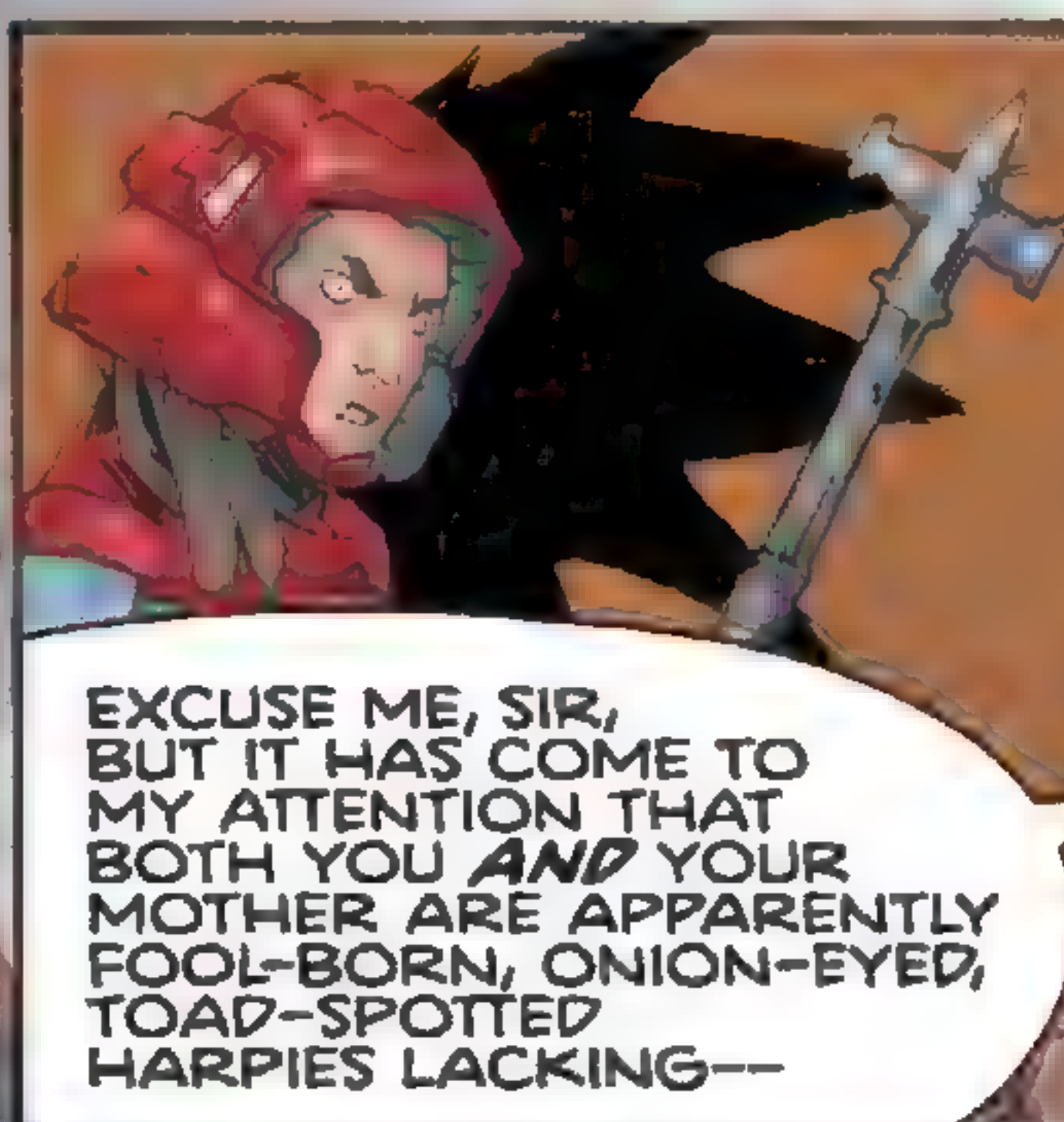
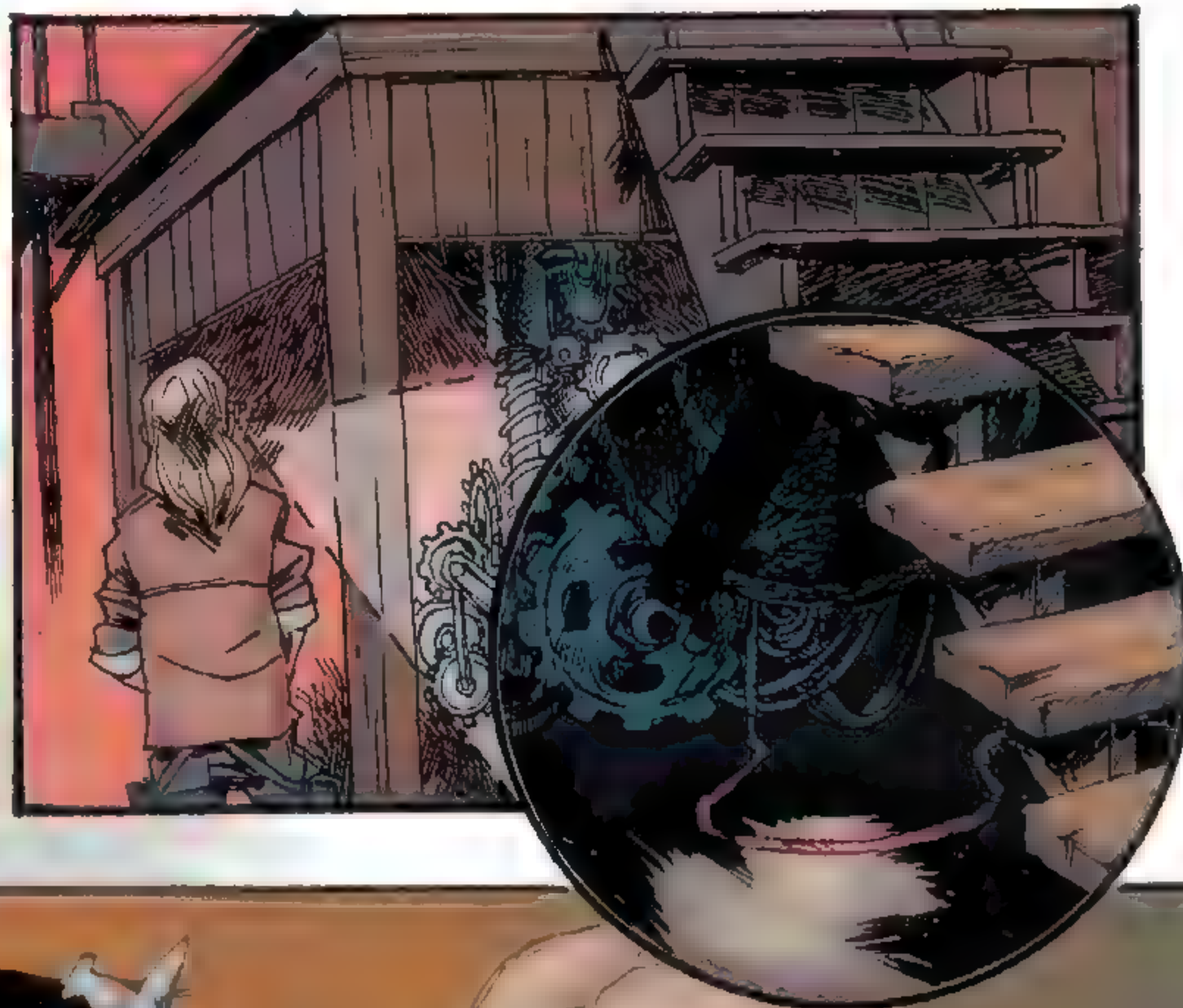
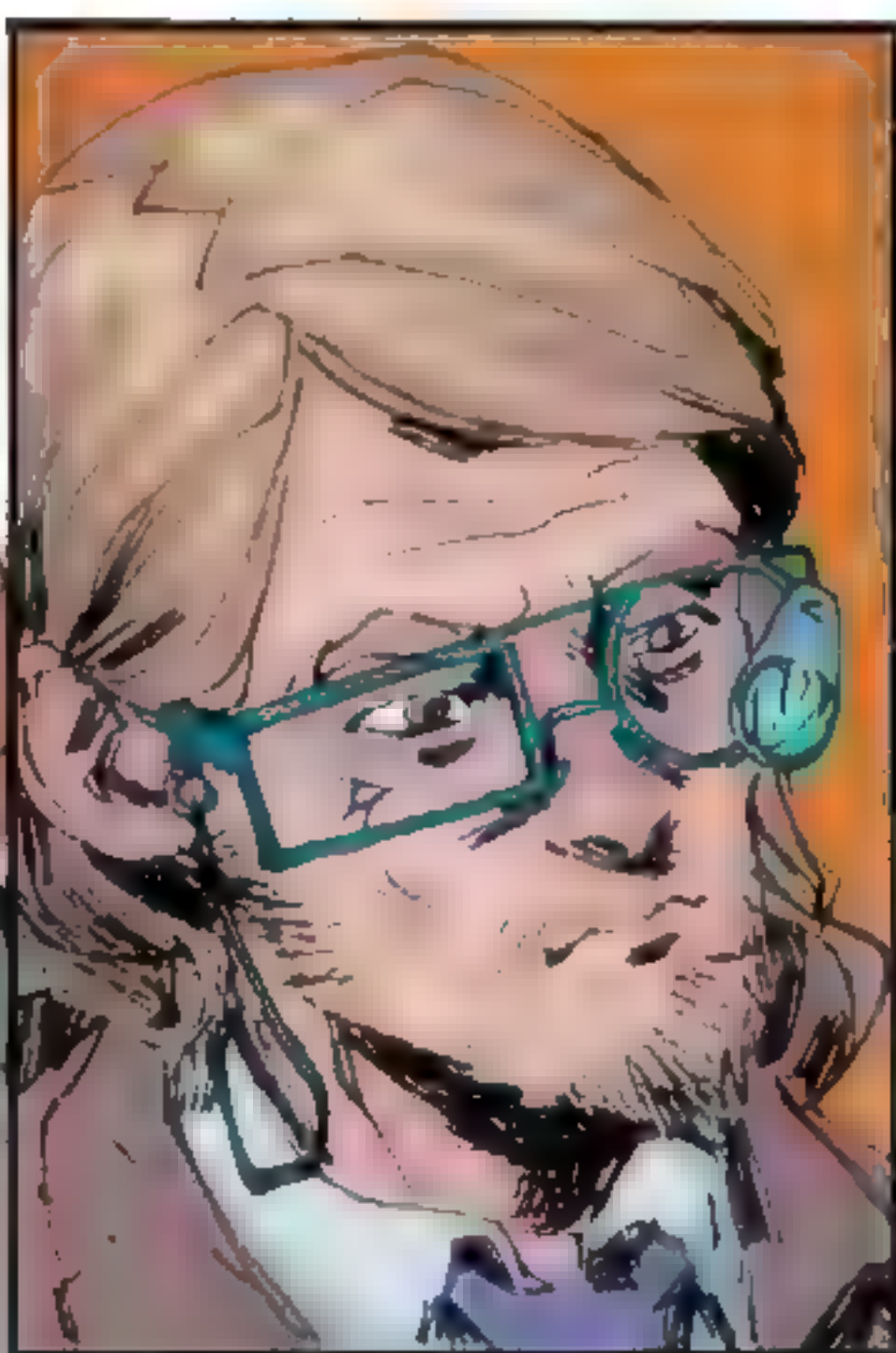


AUCTIONEER, PERHAPS YOU DID NOT HEAR ME. I NEED HEAVY LIFTERS FOR *THE PITS* OF FORTRESS PENUEL.

OF COURSE, PIT MASTER! I'VE BEEN SAVING THE ABSOLUTE BEST JUST FOR YOU. HERE THEY COME! I'M CERTAIN YOU'LL BE PLEASED...

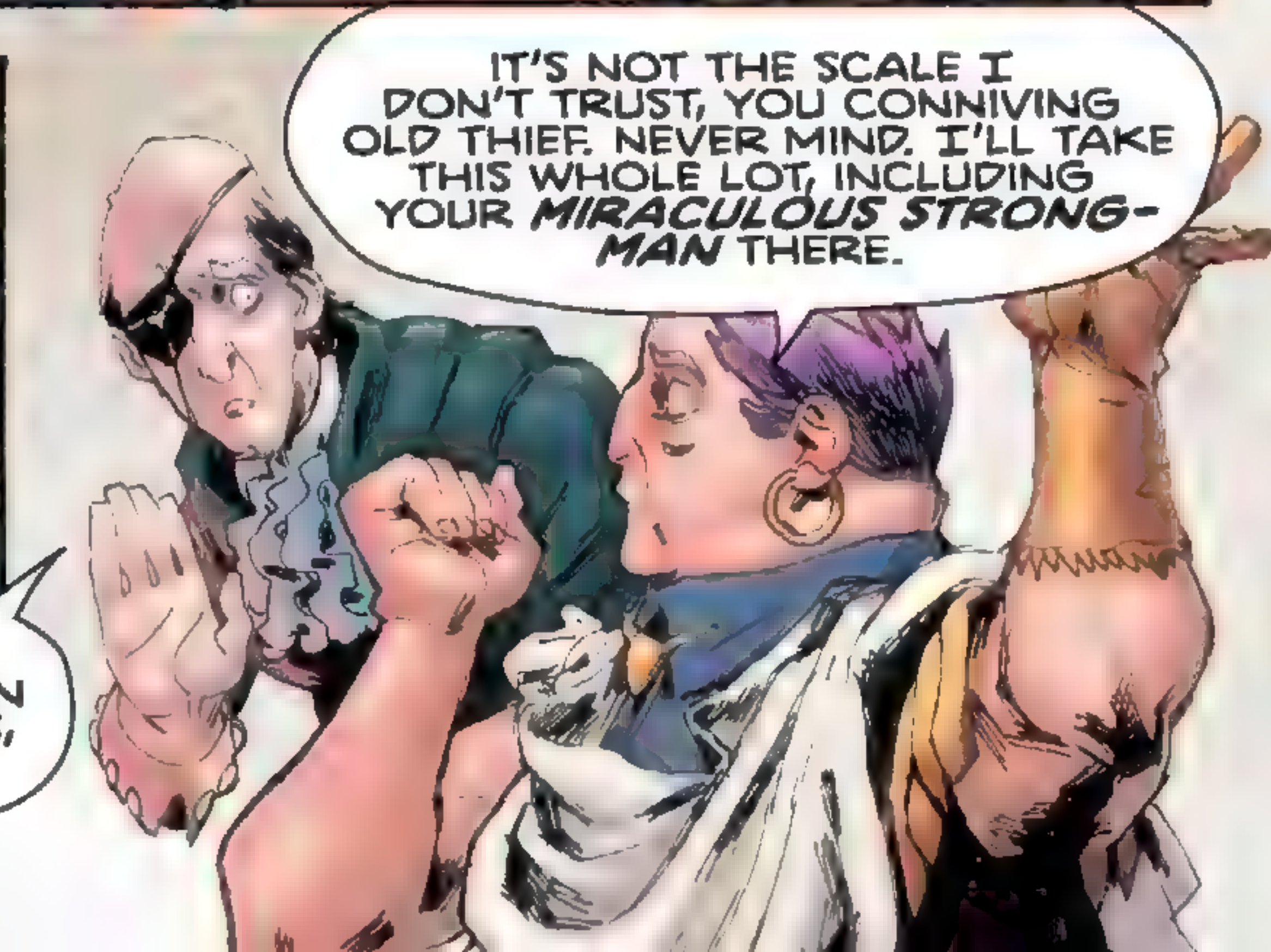
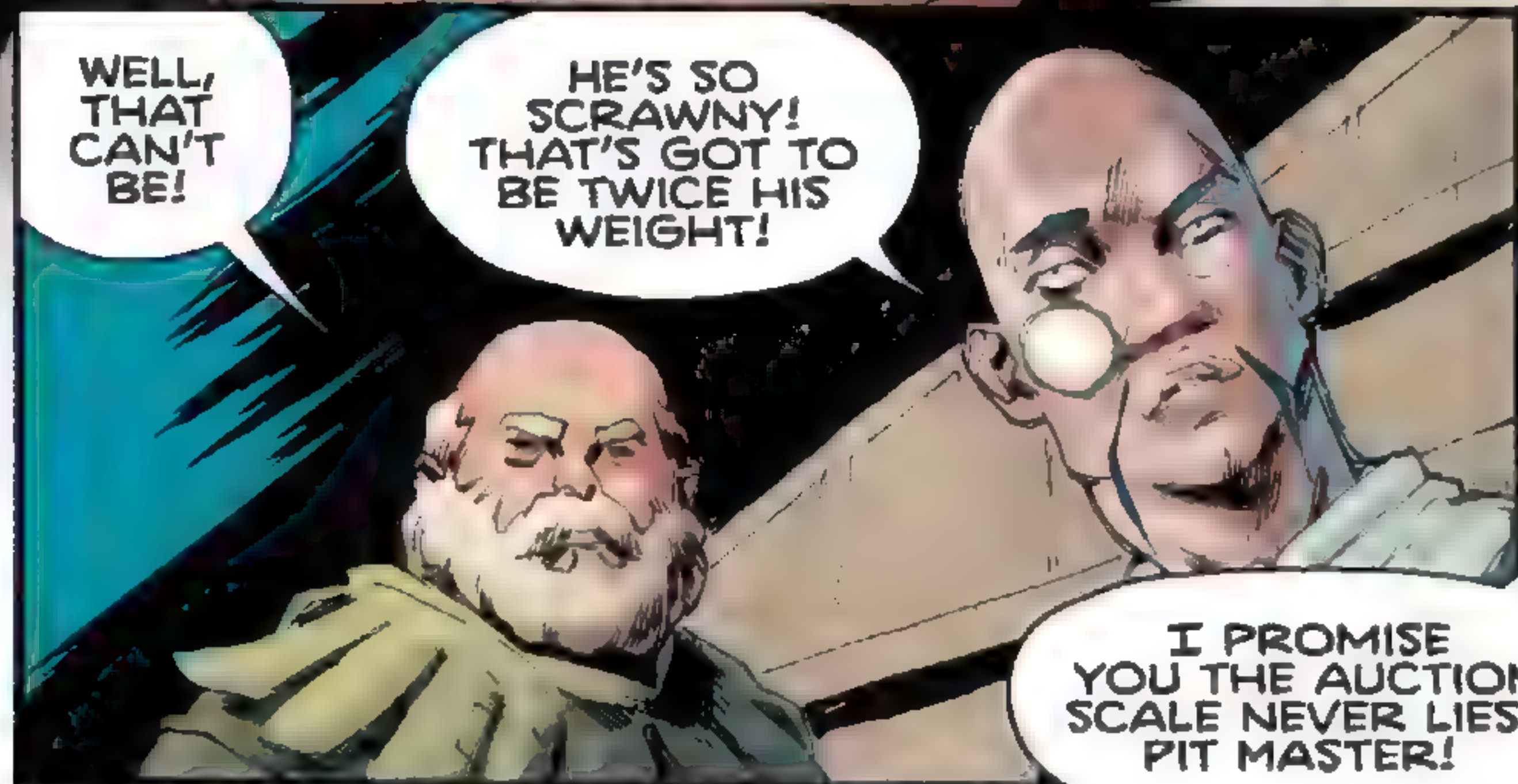
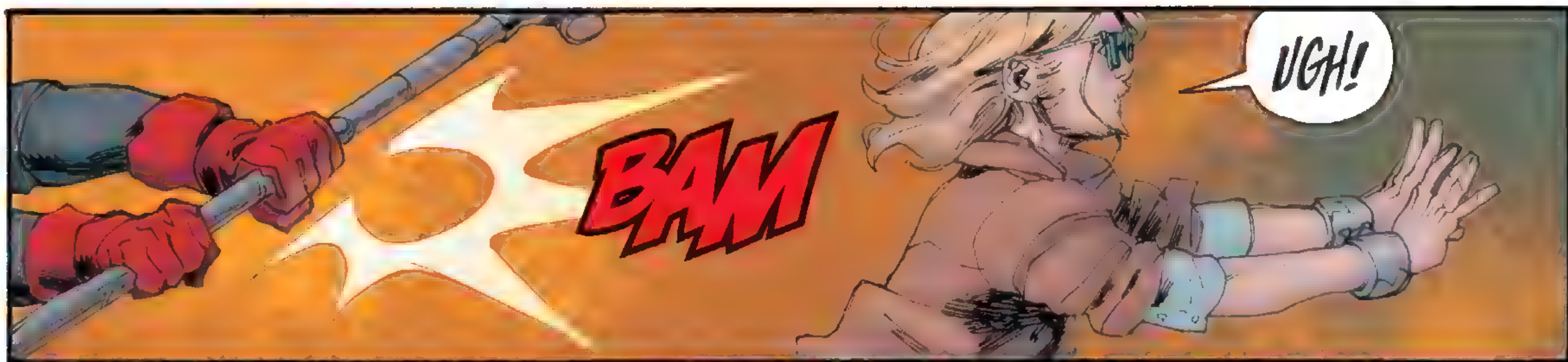


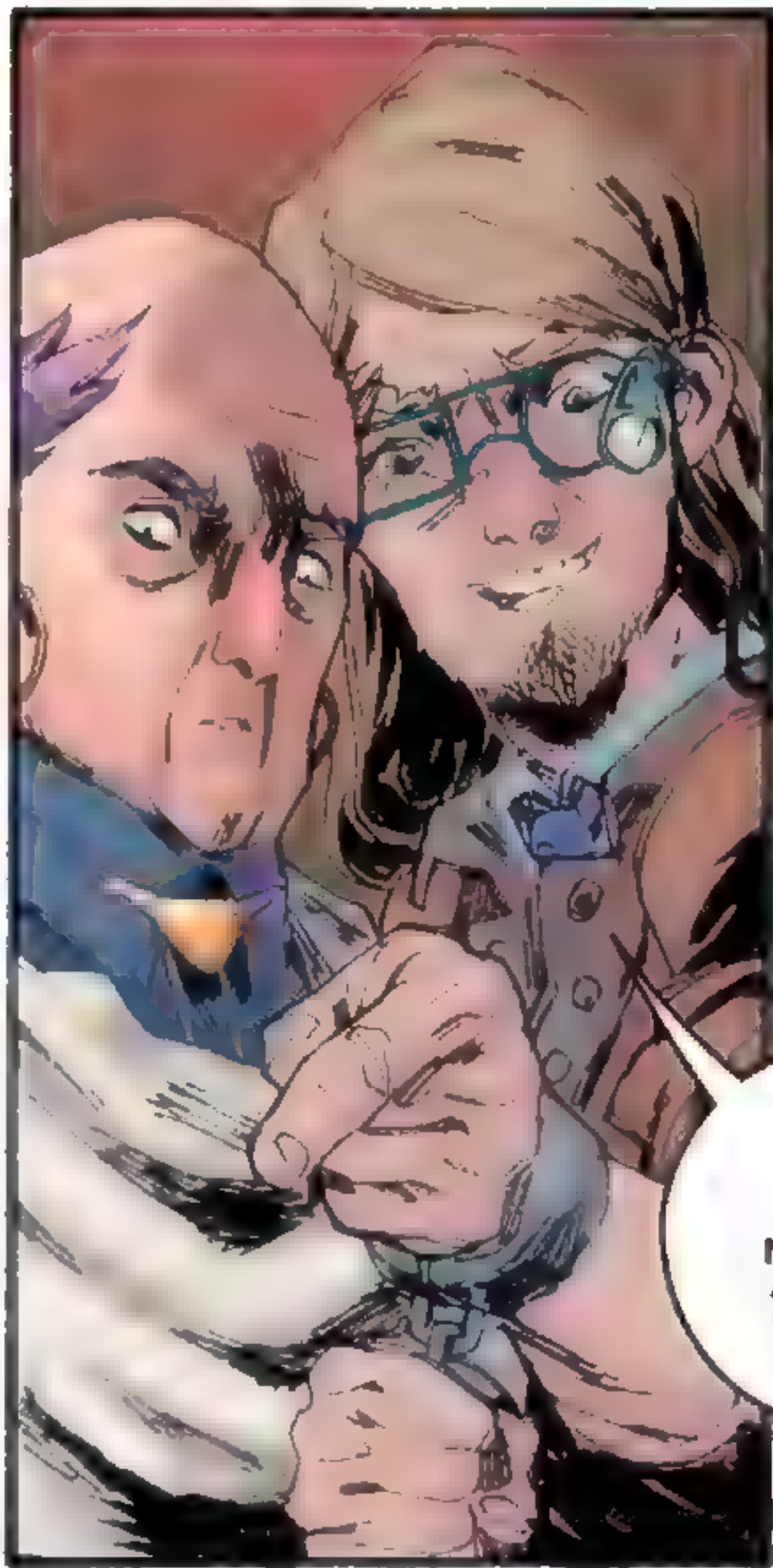
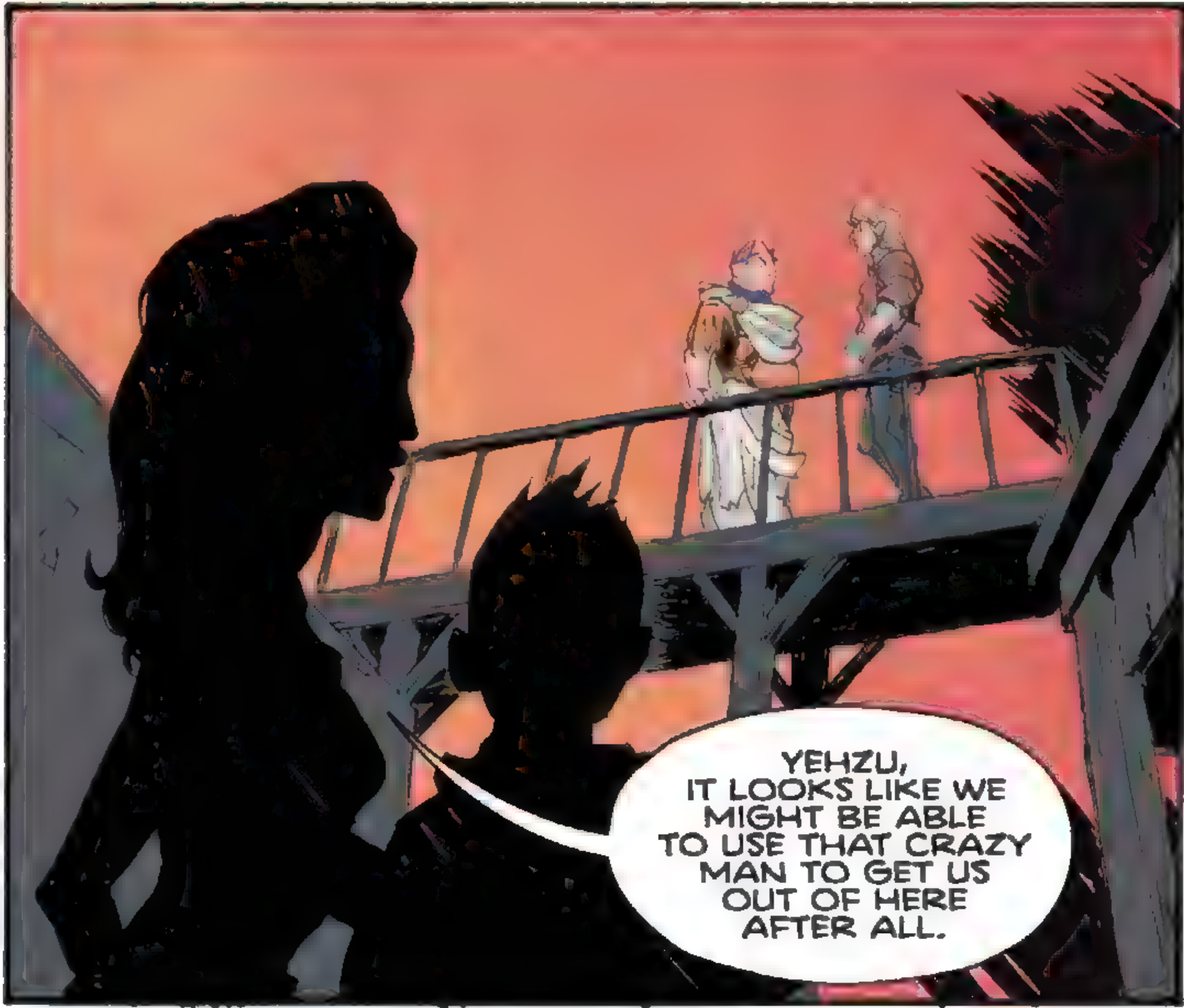
I'VE GOT TO GET TO PENUEL... SOMEHOW.



EXCUSE ME, SIR, BUT IT HAS COME TO MY ATTENTION THAT BOTH YOU *AND* YOUR MOTHER ARE APPARENTLY FOOL-BORN, ONION-EYED, TOAD-SPOTTED HARPIES LACKING--









I SAW
WHAT YOU DID
WITH THE SCALE.
NOW HOW ARE
YOU GOING TO
GET US OUT OF
HERE?



RIGHT. OKAY, IN ORDER TO RESCUE
ANZIO, NATURALLY WE HAVE TO
GET INSIDE FORTRESS PENUEL.
DAUNTING TASK? YES! BUT
THAT'S EXACTLY WHERE
WE'RE HEADED, YOU SEE?
WE JUST FOLLOW ALONG
FOR NOW...

OH NO,
NO, NO, NO.
WE ARE NOT
RESCUING
ANYBODY.



LOOK, I'M A
PROSTITUTE--A VALK.
I DON'T CARE ABOUT
YOUR ANZIO. I
THOUGHT YOU COULD
HELP US ESCAPE BUT
I WAS WRONG...SO
STAY AWAY.

I'M SORRY,
YEHZU, THERE'S
NOTHING HE
CAN DO FOR US.

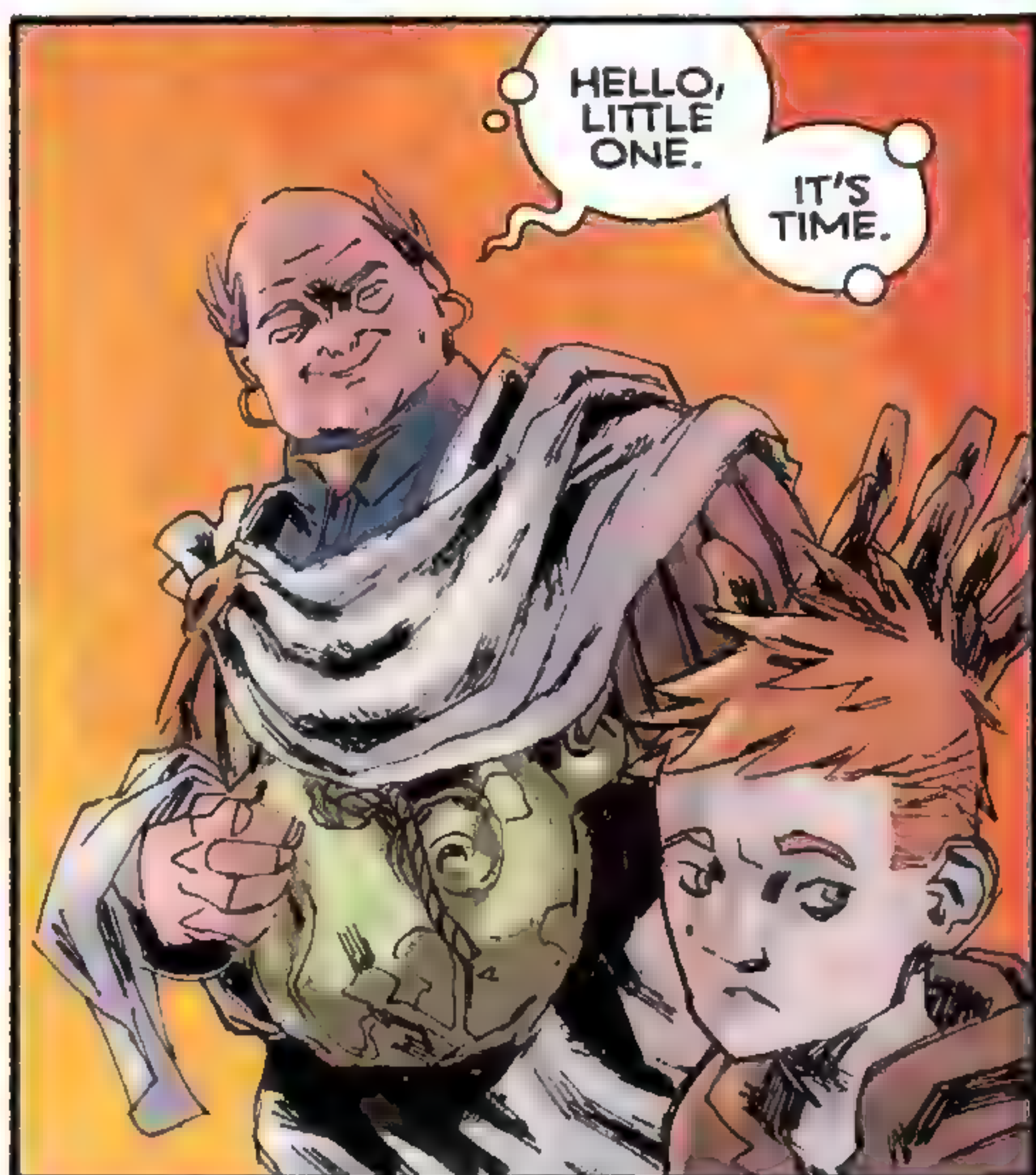
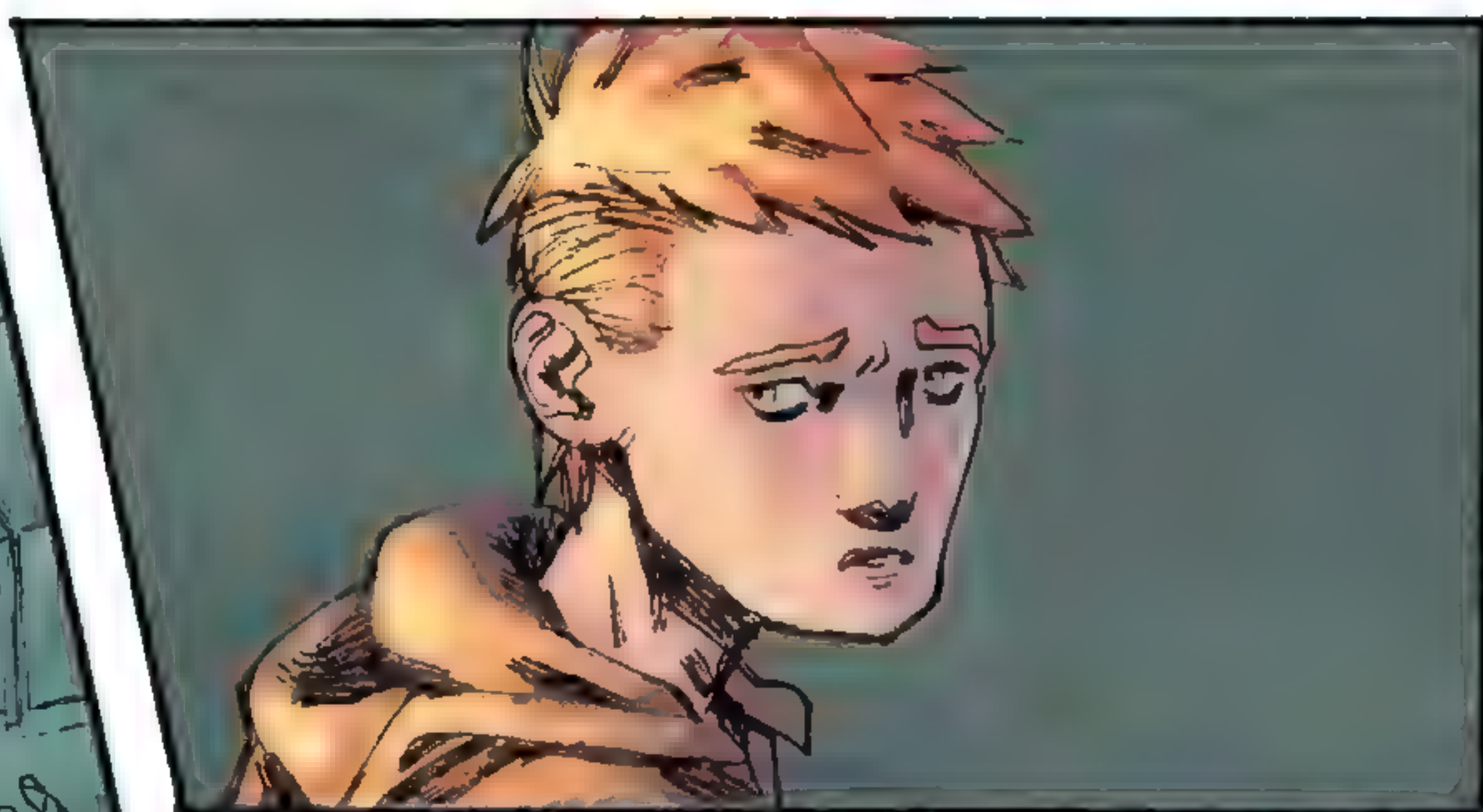
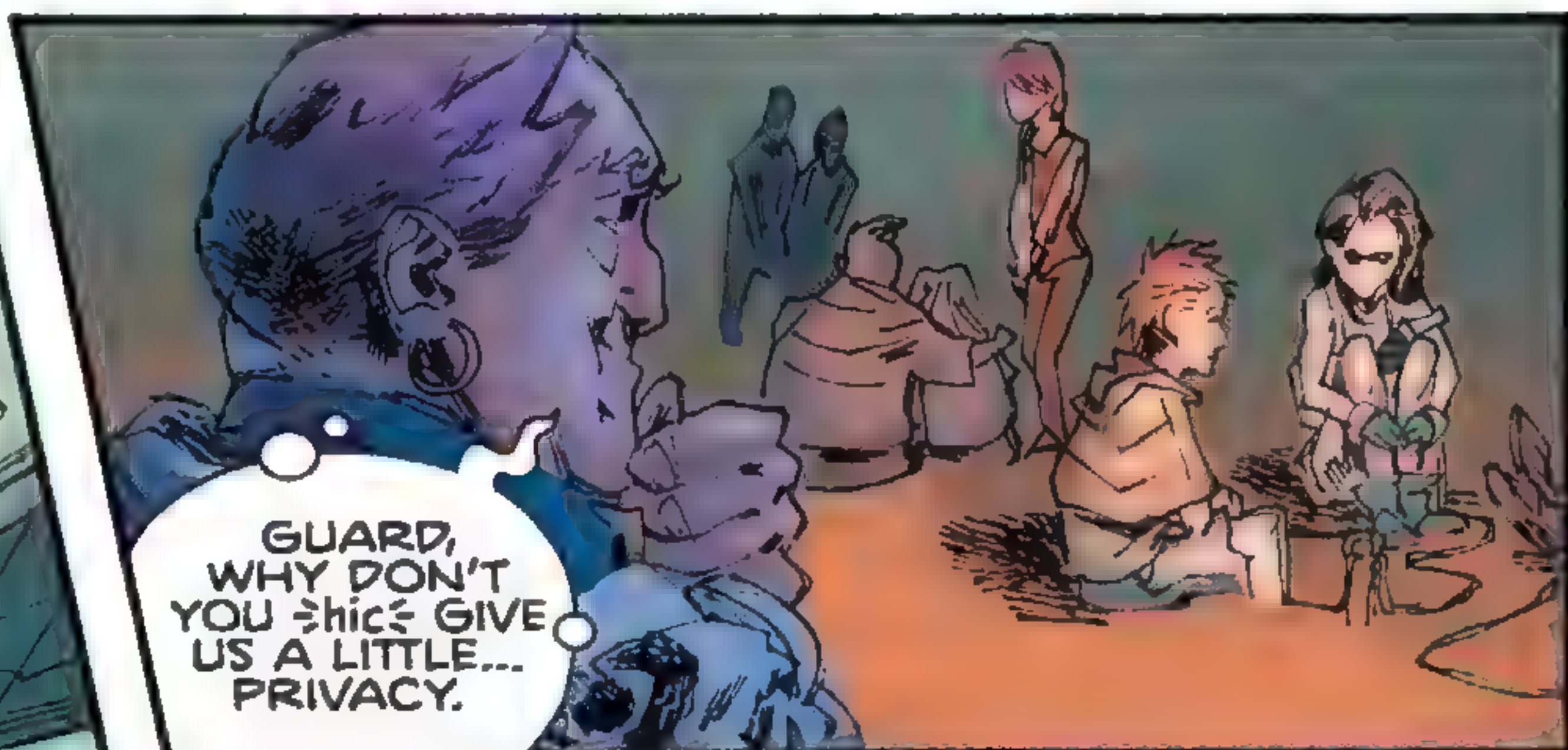
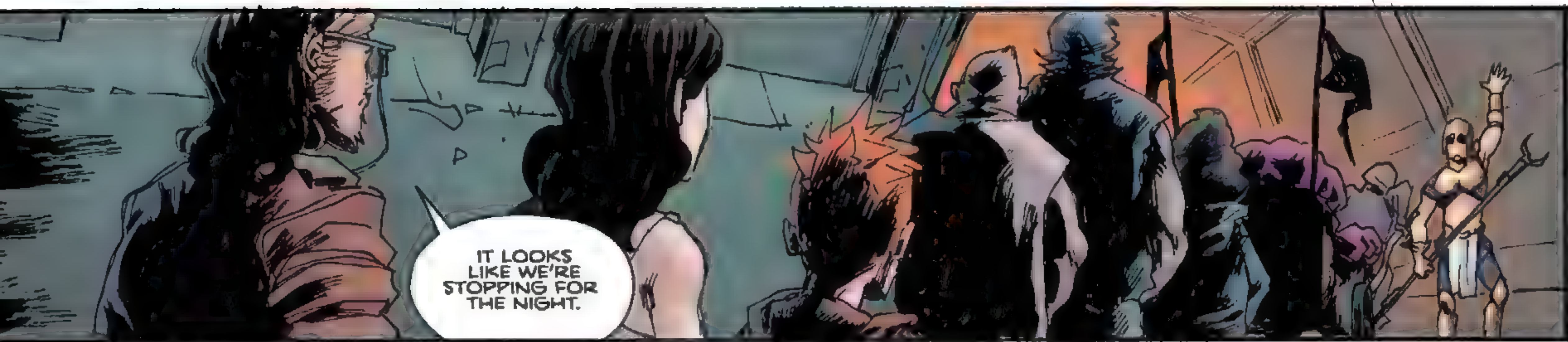


WELL,
I CAN
DO...

...THIS.

KLIK





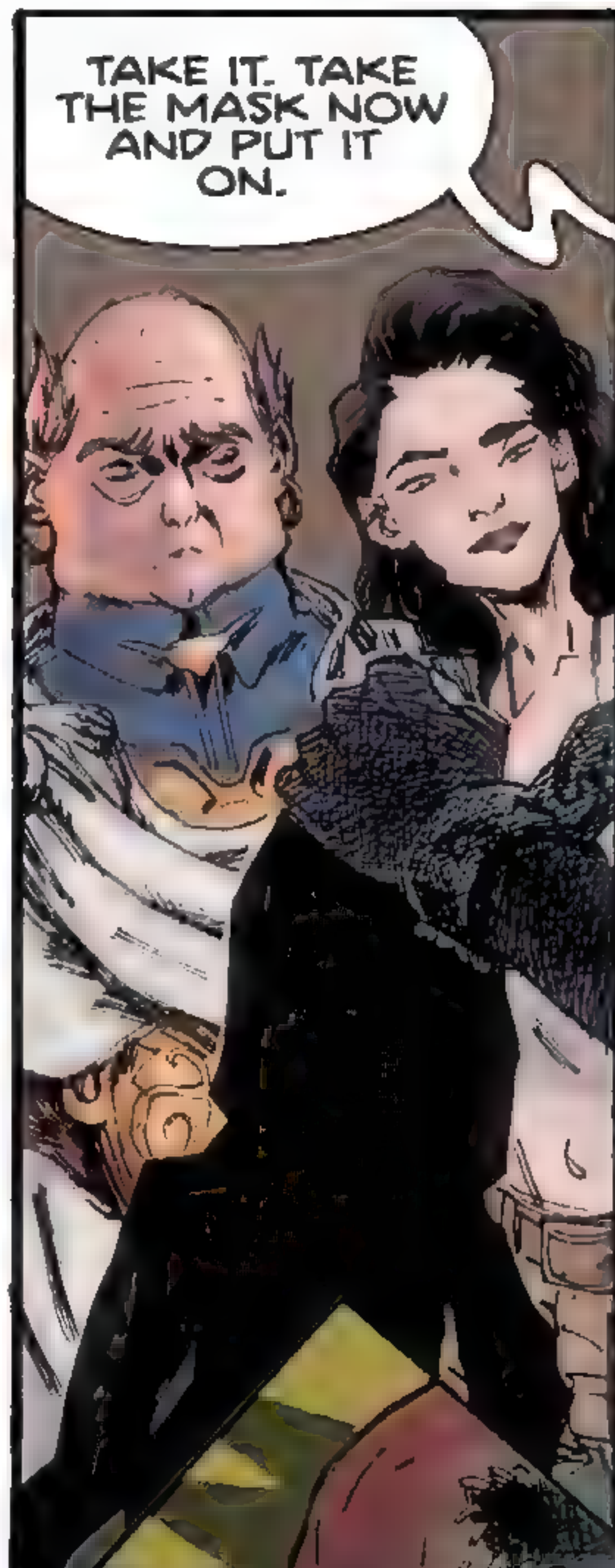


LOOK HERE!
LOOK...THIS IS THE
MASK WORN BY GENERAL
CHINA. THE *REAL* MASK, I
SWEAR IT ON MY LIFE. IT HAS
TREMENDOUS POWERS. TOMO
WOLFE HIMSELF IS DESPERATELY
SEEKING ITS RETURN AND...
I'LL GIVE IT TO YOU.

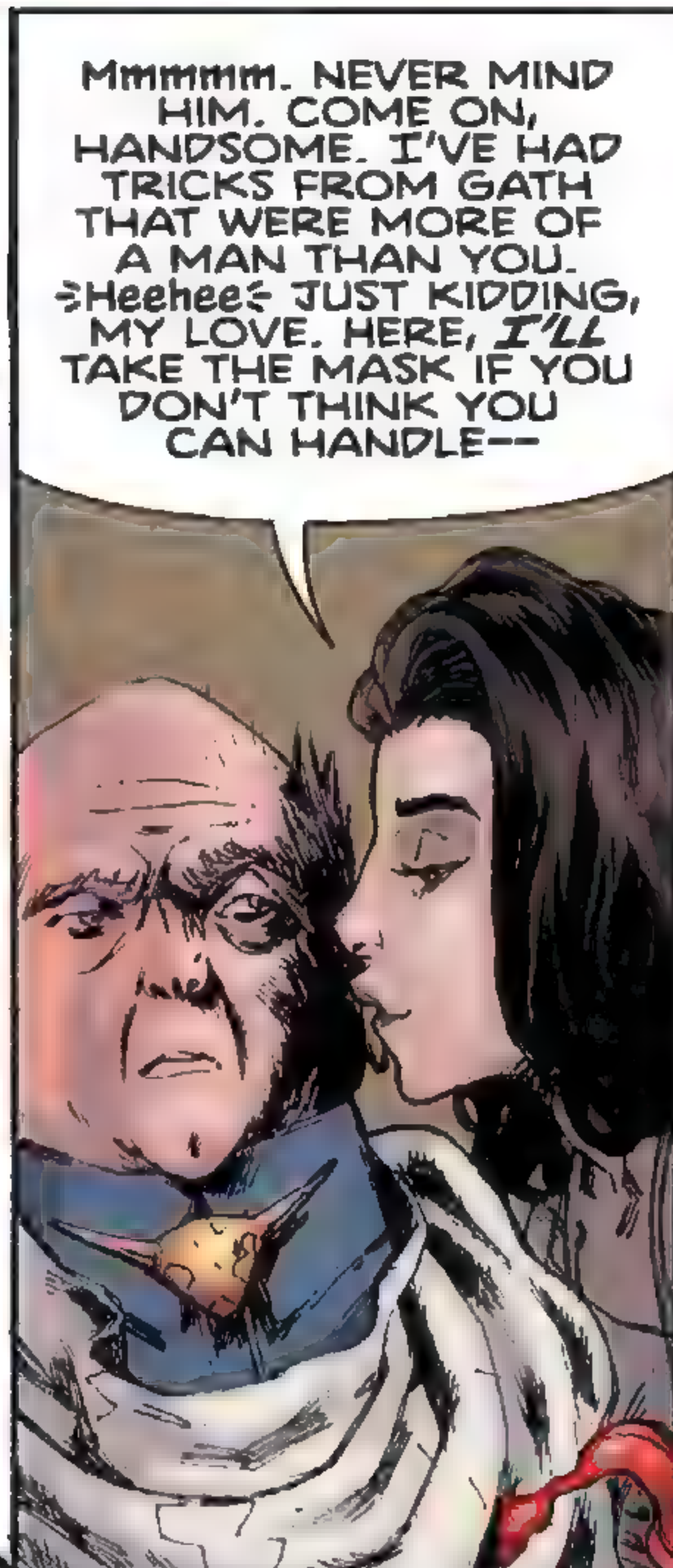
I'LL
GIVE IT TO
YOU IF YOU
LEAVE THEM
ALONE.



Hah! RID--hic--ULOUS.
STRONG MAN, YOU hic--
ANNOY ME. I WILL GET
WHAT I PAID FOR hic--
AND DISPOSE OF THESE
TWO TONIGHT. THEY
ARE OF NO USE TO ME
IN THE PITS. BEGONE,
OR I'LL DISPOSE OF
YOU hic-- AS
WELL!



TAKE IT. TAKE
THE MASK NOW
AND PUT IT
ON.

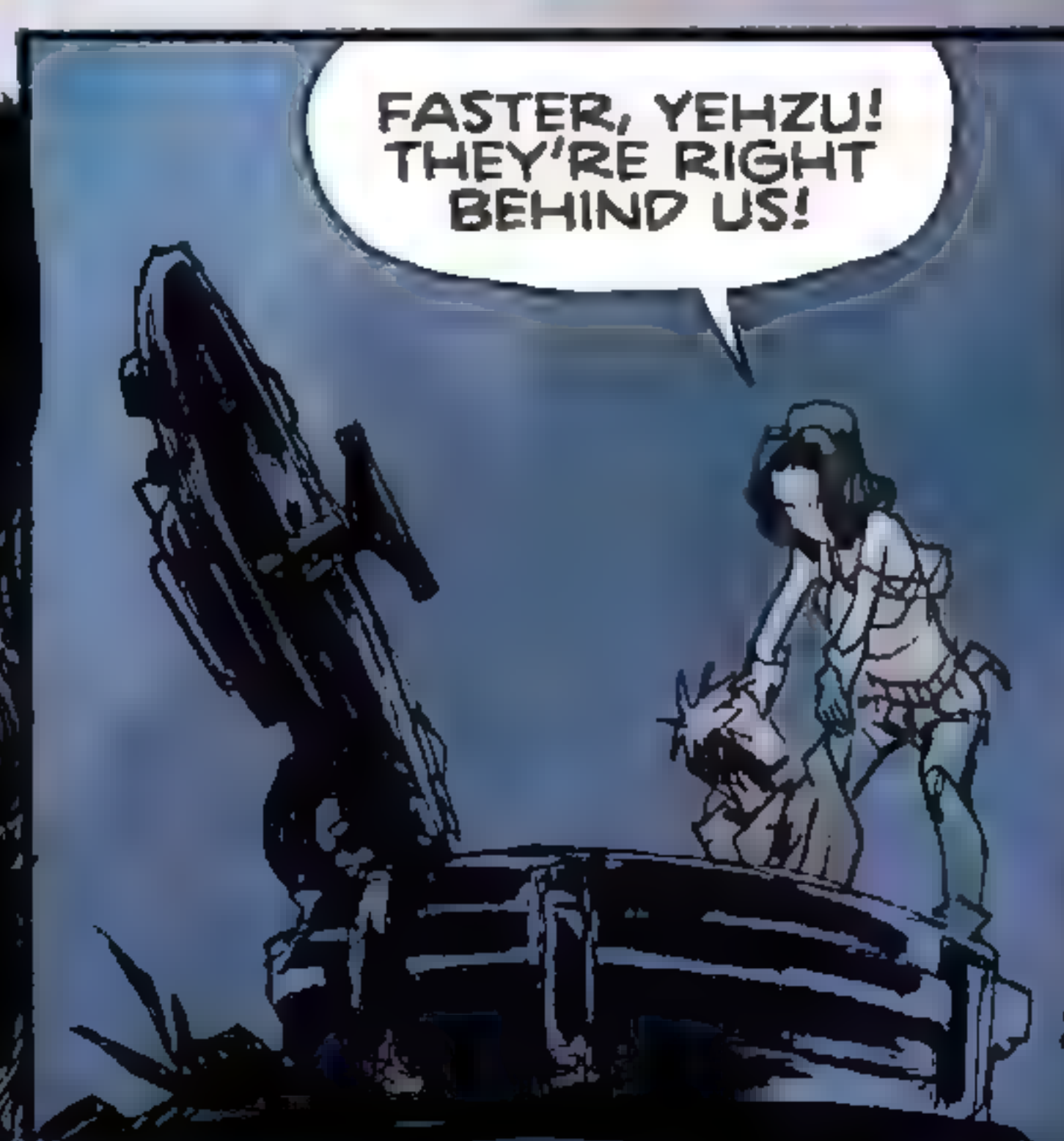
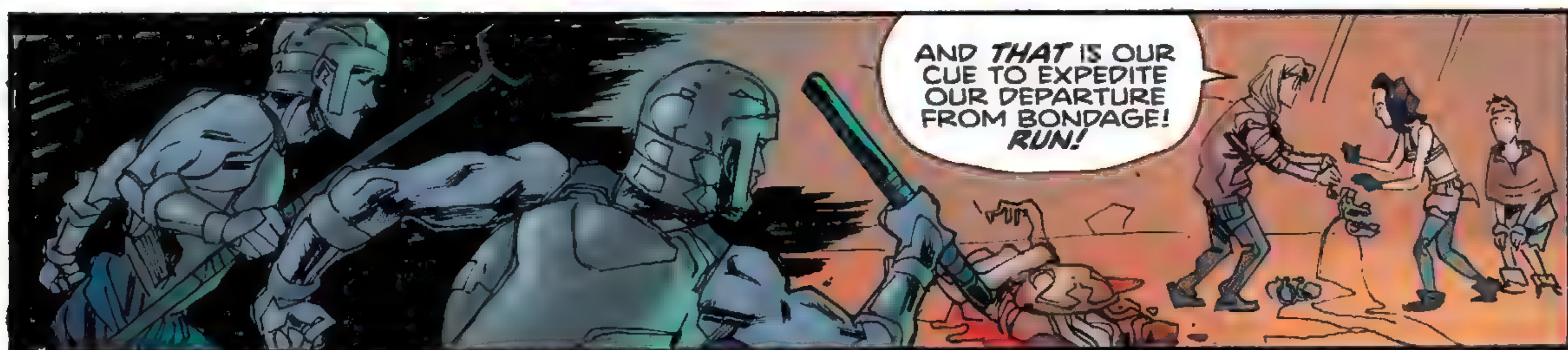
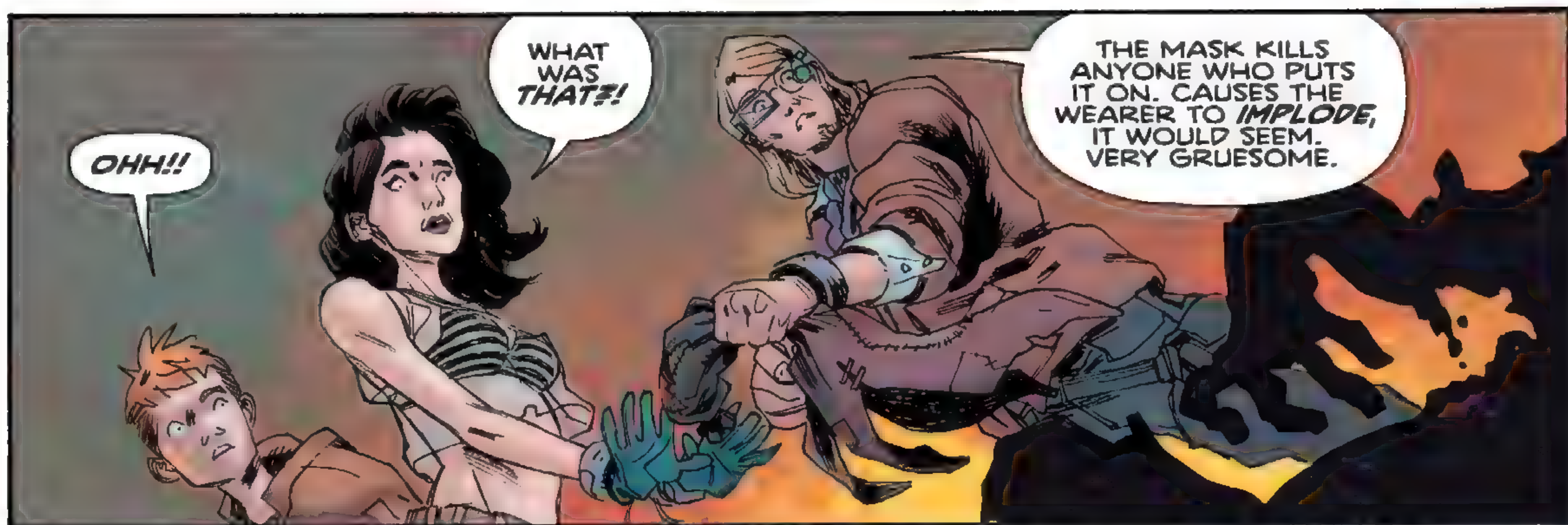


Mmmmm. NEVER MIND
HIM. COME ON,
HANDSOME. I'VE HAD
TRICKS FROM GATH
THAT WERE MORE OF
A MAN THAN YOU.
Heehee JUST KIDDING,
MY LOVE. HERE, I'LL
TAKE THE MASK IF YOU
DON'T THINK YOU
CAN HANDLE--



Bah!
FOOLISHNESS.
VALKS AND
THEIR TWISTED
TASTES...YOU'LL
SEE WHO...







SUMPH THERE.
HATCH IS SECURE.
NO ONE'S GOING
IN OR OUT OF
IT AGAIN.

ORCHID?
IS THIS THE
WILD?

I
SUPPOSE
IT IS...



I WOULDN'T
WORRY. THE
RUMORS AND
CONJECTURE
ARE LIKELY
OVERSTATED.



I'M
SURE...
WE'RE NOT...
IN...ANY
DANGER.



OKAY. LET ME
THINK. IN SITUATIONS
LIKE THIS IT'S BEST
TO STAY CALM.



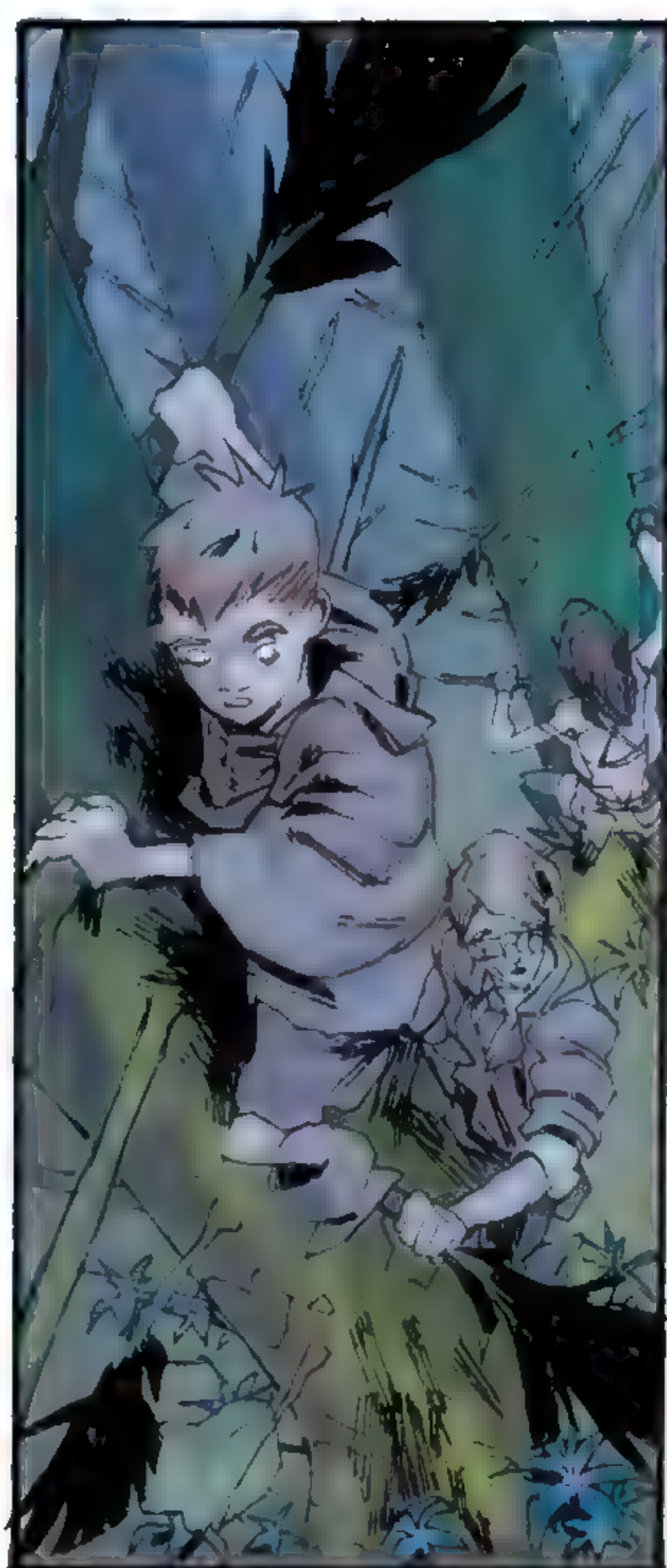
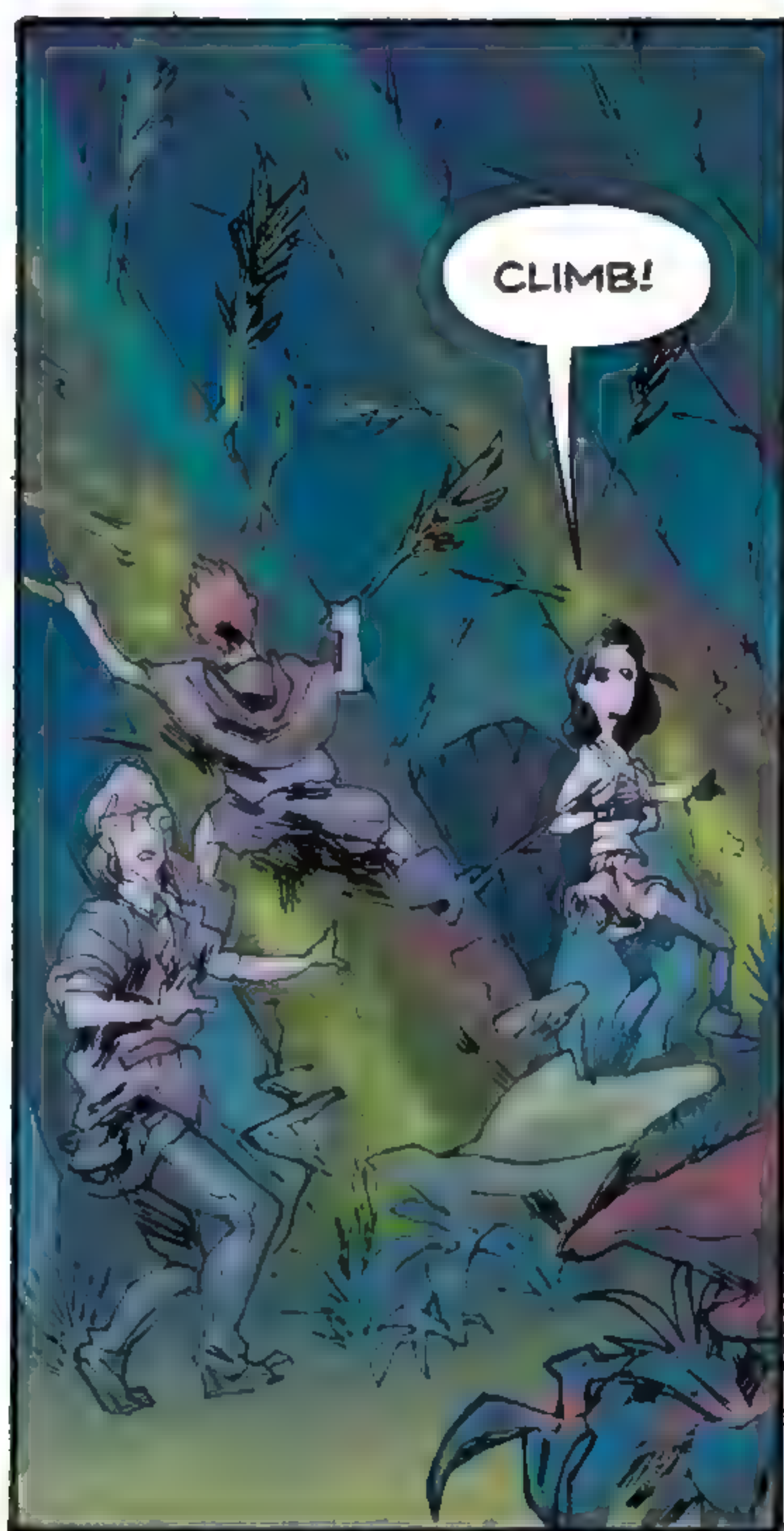
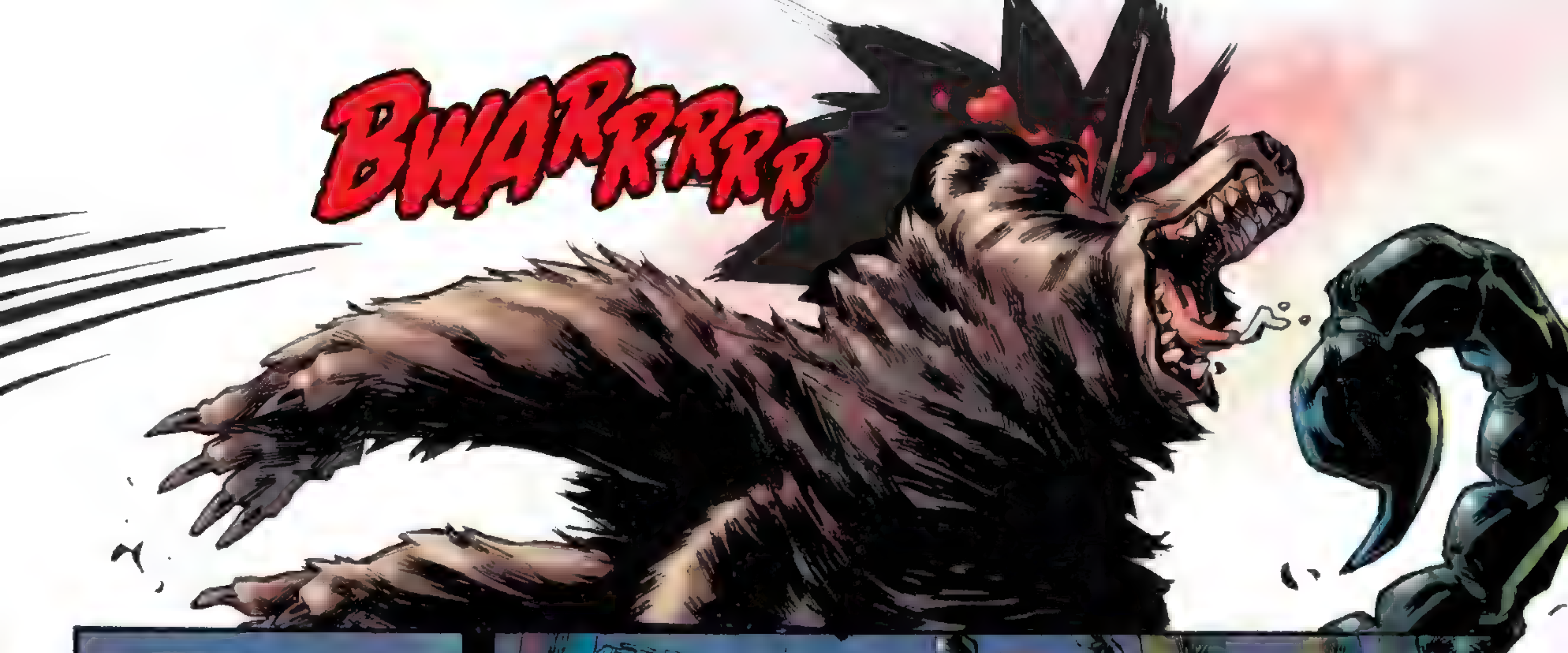
HERE'S
WHAT WE
NEED TO
DO. IF WE
QUICKLY
CONSTRUCT
A...hmm...
NO...

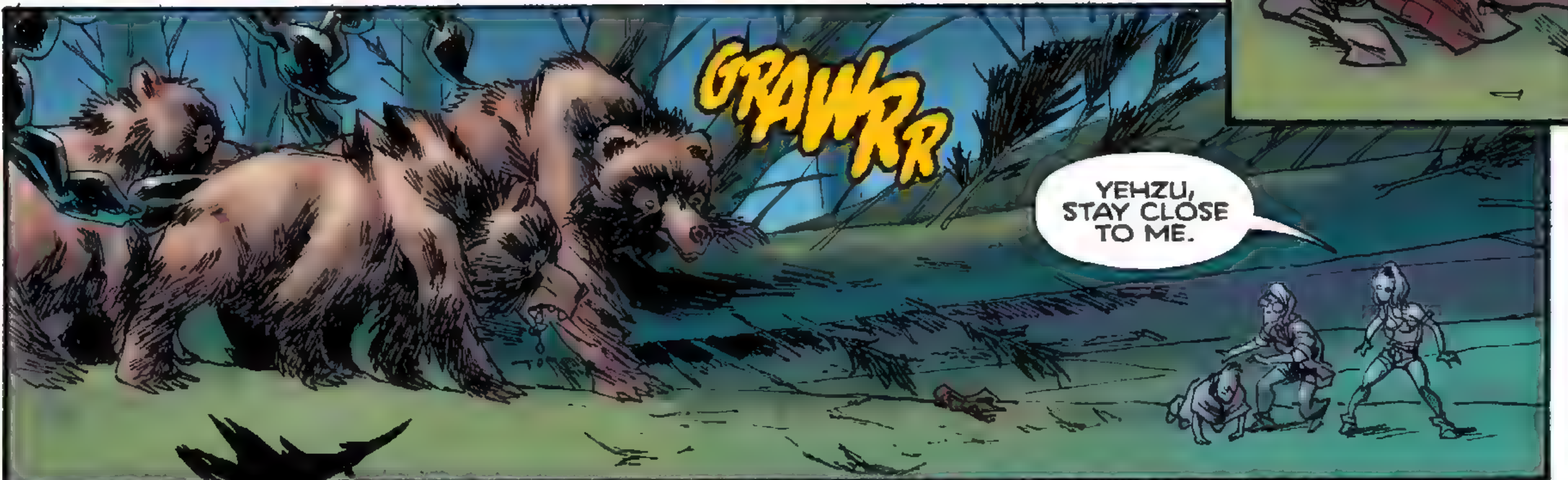


AH! DAMN
HATCH! CLOSED,
OF COURSE.
RIGHT, THAT
WAS ME.

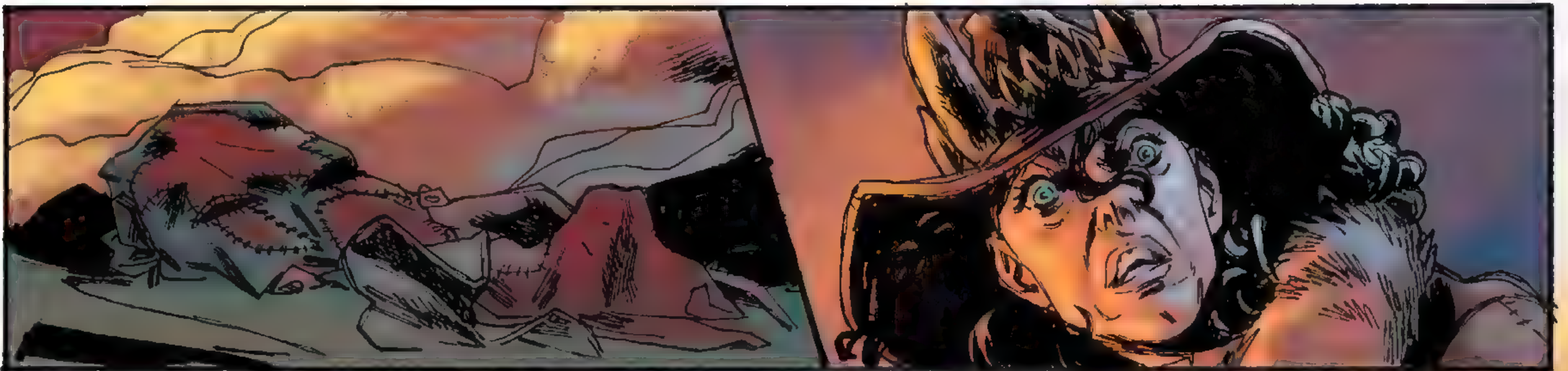
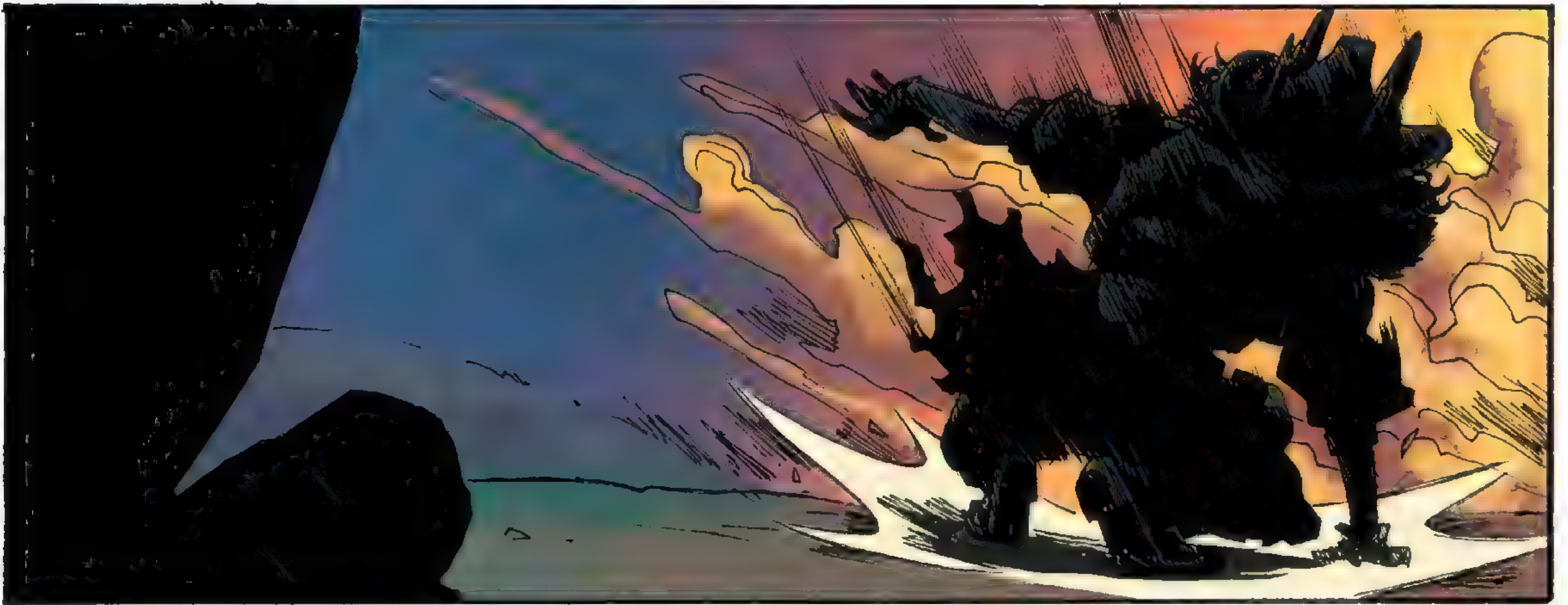
HANG ON!
I'M SURE
I'LL THINK OF
SOMETHING
ANY
MINUTE...

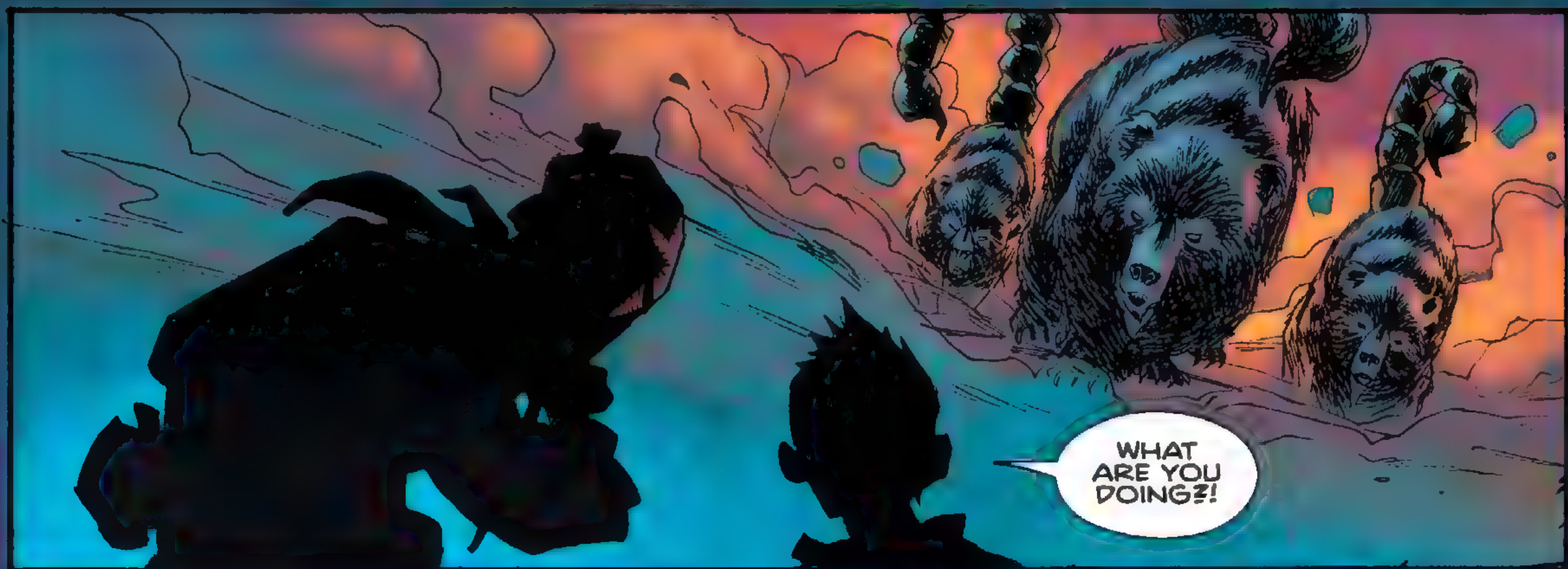














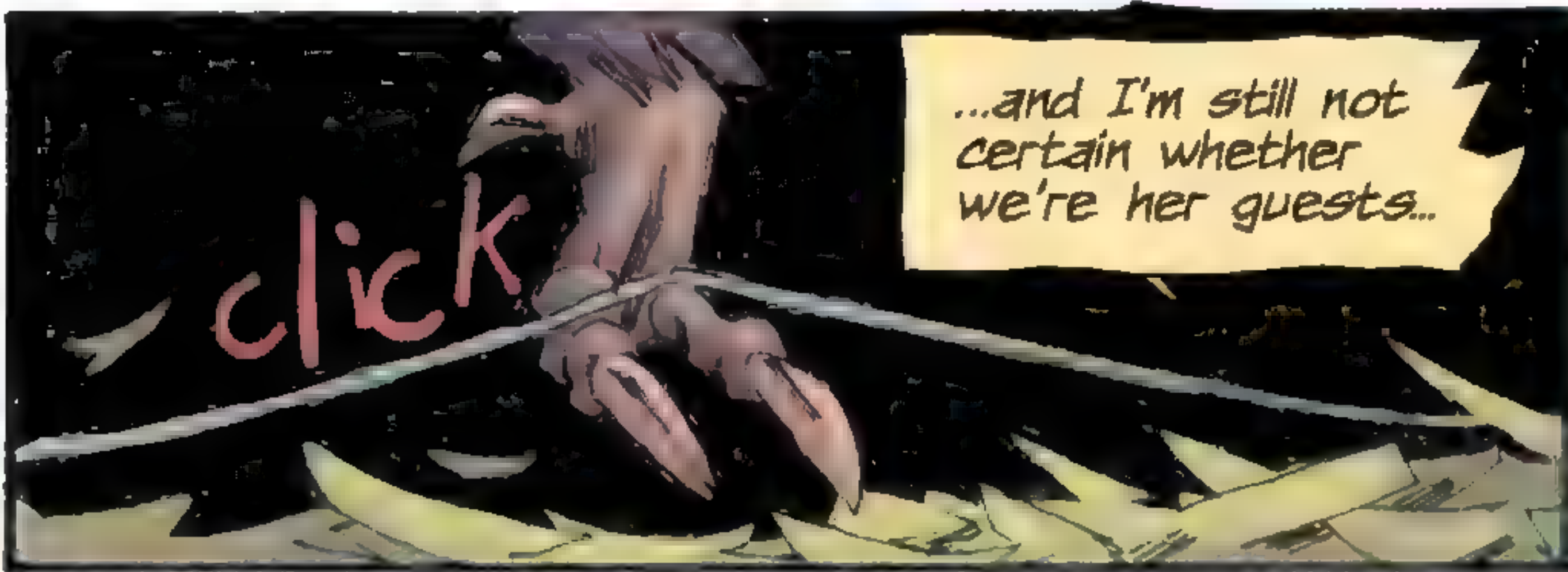




She doesn't speak to us. She doesn't even look at us.



It's been eleven days under her roof...



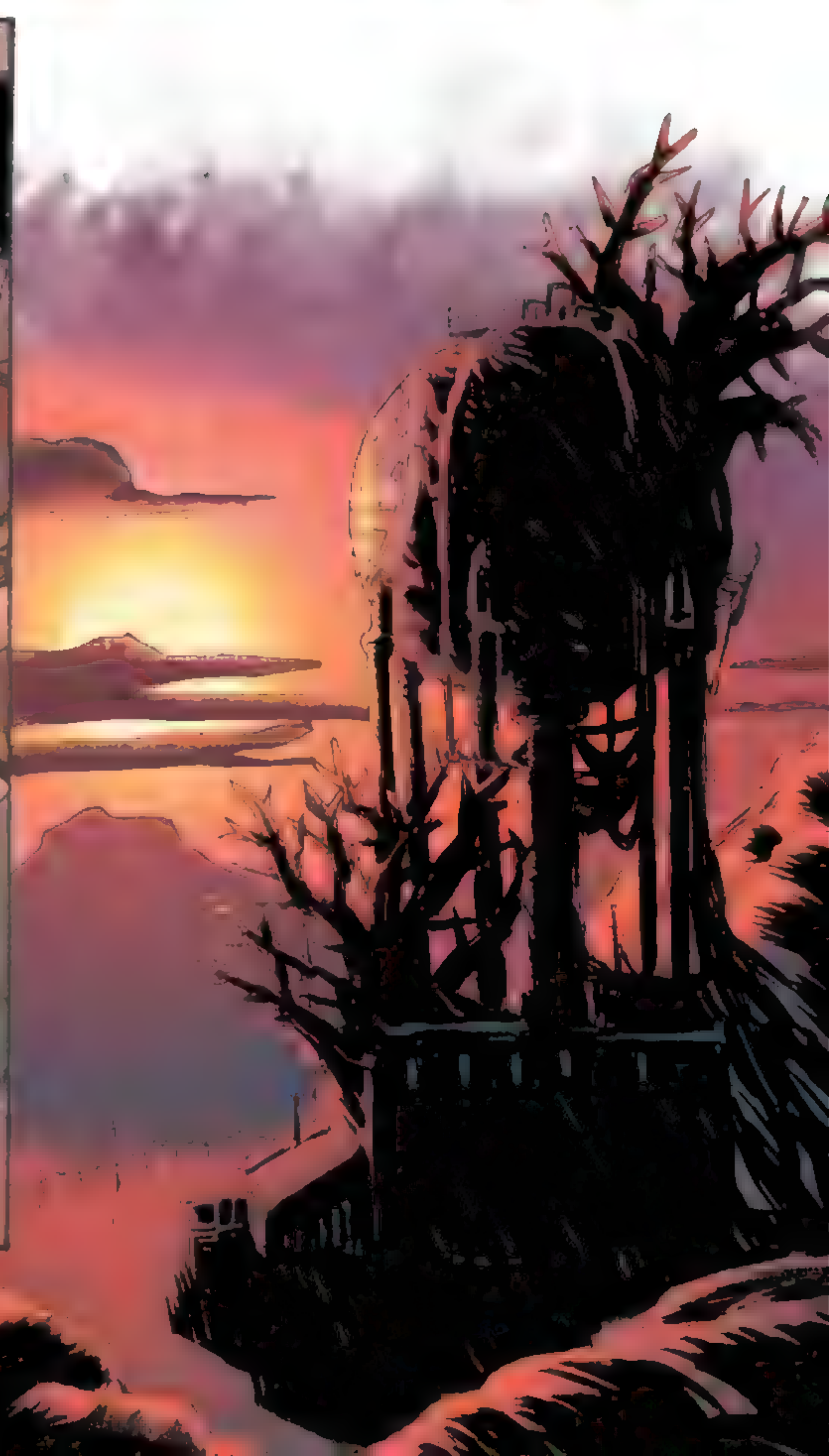
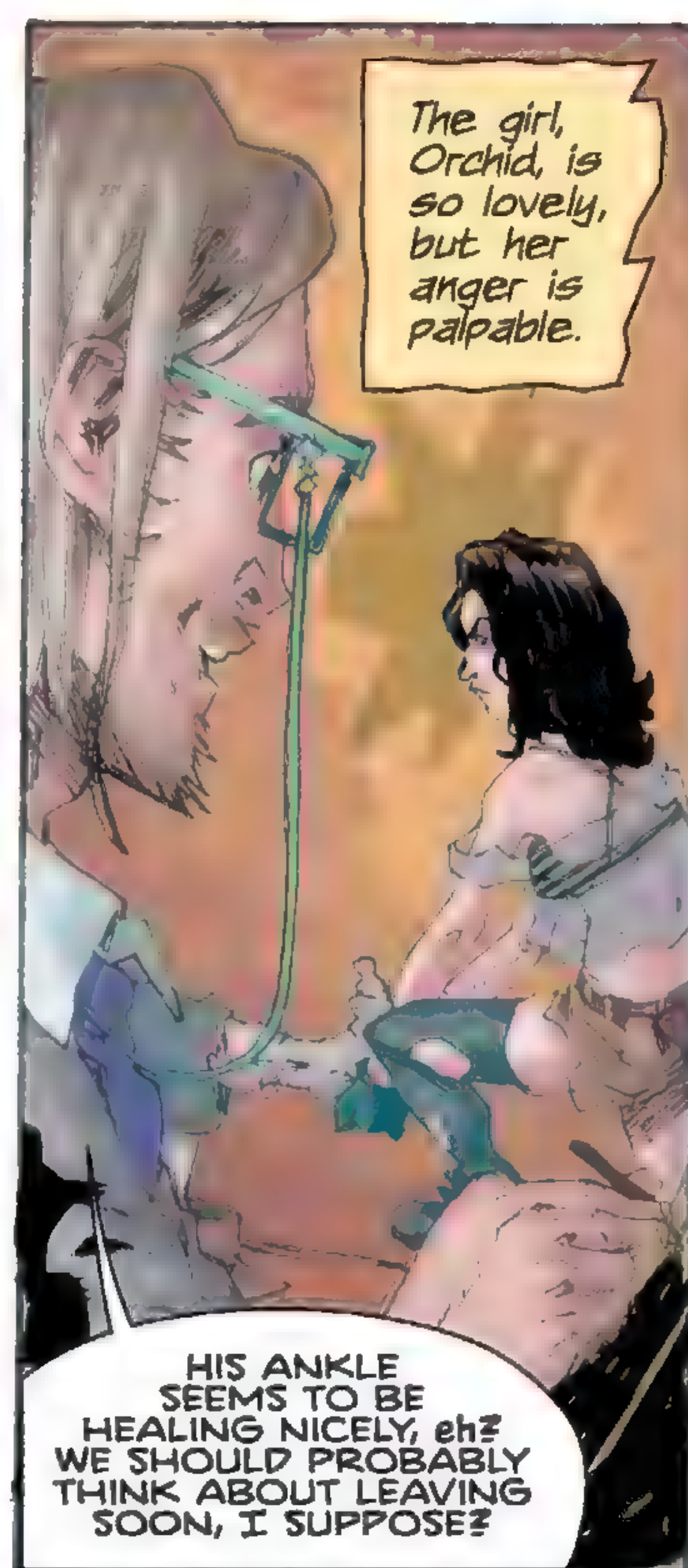
...and I'm still not certain whether we're her guests...

click



...under her protection and care...

WOOSH



For all her eccentricities, our host/captor has somehow rigged an ancient oil reserve tank to provide warmth and protect the grounds from the horrors lurking beyond the perimeter.



In this strange oasis in the Deep Wild, the days pass in relative peace.



But I've already overstayed. I must get to Fortress Penue. Anzio's to be executed on the full moon and any hope we have rests in him.

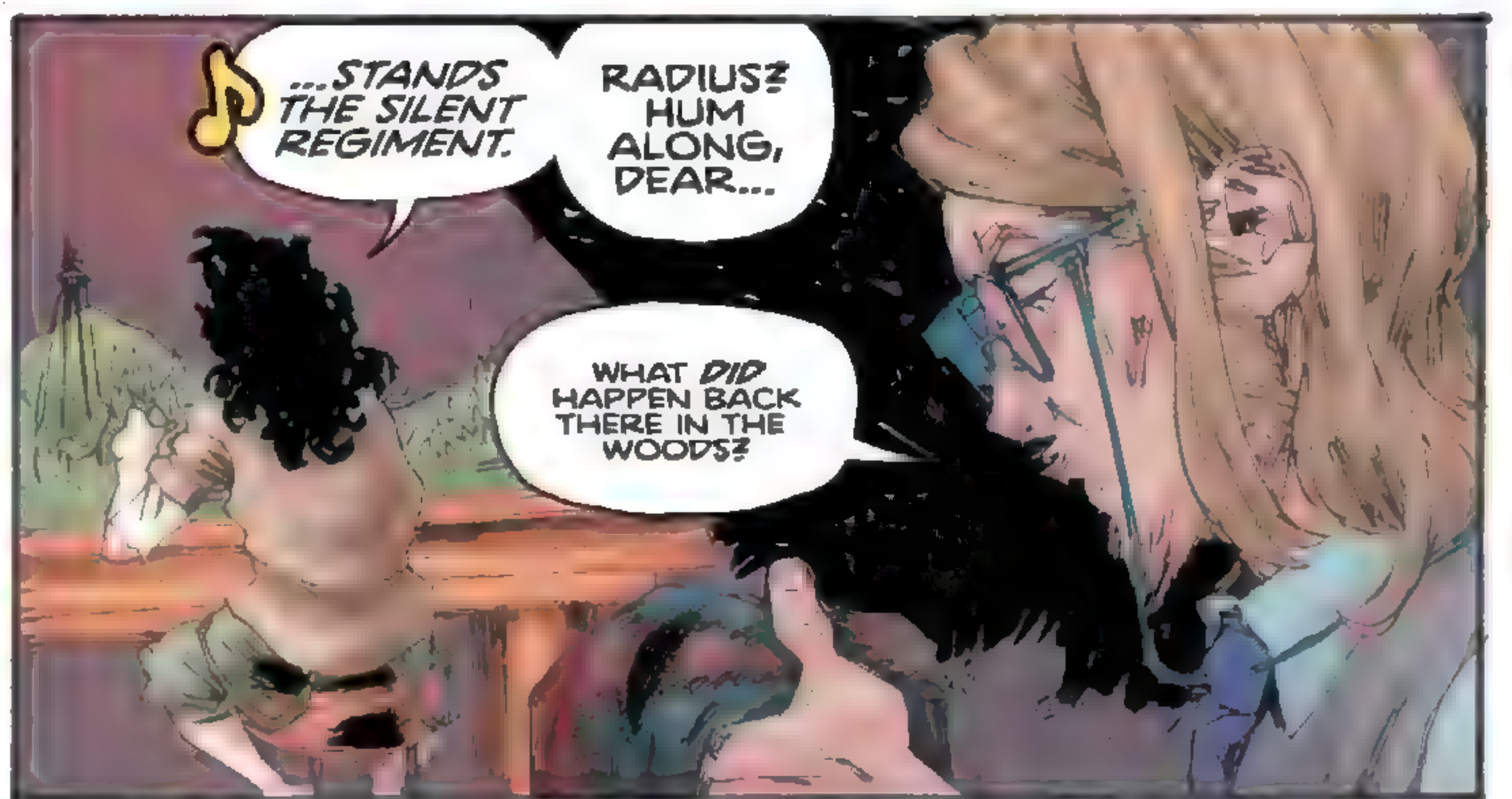


But the old woman ignores every inquiry, stonewalls every question...

SOOO...HI. YES. HELLO? UM, PERHAPS I WAS UNCLEAR THE PREVIOUS TWO HUNDRED TIMES I ASKED, BUT...WHAT'S YOUR NAME? WHERE ARE WE? AND WHAT EXACTLY HAPPENED BACK THERE IN THE WOODS?



Shum shum shum o'ree...
SOLDIERS STILL AND ORDERLY, ARM TO ARM AND KNEE TO KNEE, WAITING FOR THE GREAT EVENT...



...STANDS THE SILENT REGIMENT.

RADIUS? HUM ALONG, DEAR...

WHAT DID HAPPEN BACK THERE IN THE WOODS?



We had no idea the boy had twisted his ankle and fallen behind.

HELP ME!!

By the time we discovered he was missing, there was nothing we could do.

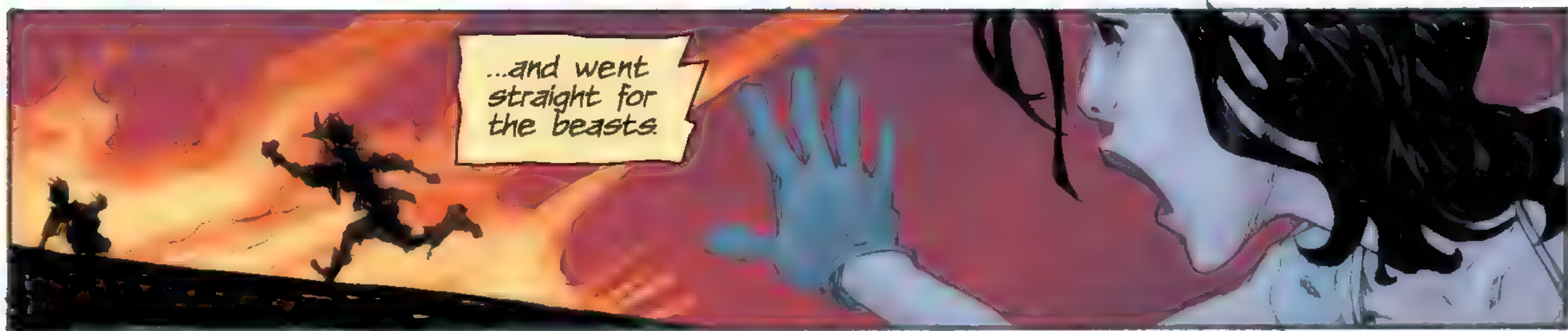
YEHZU!!

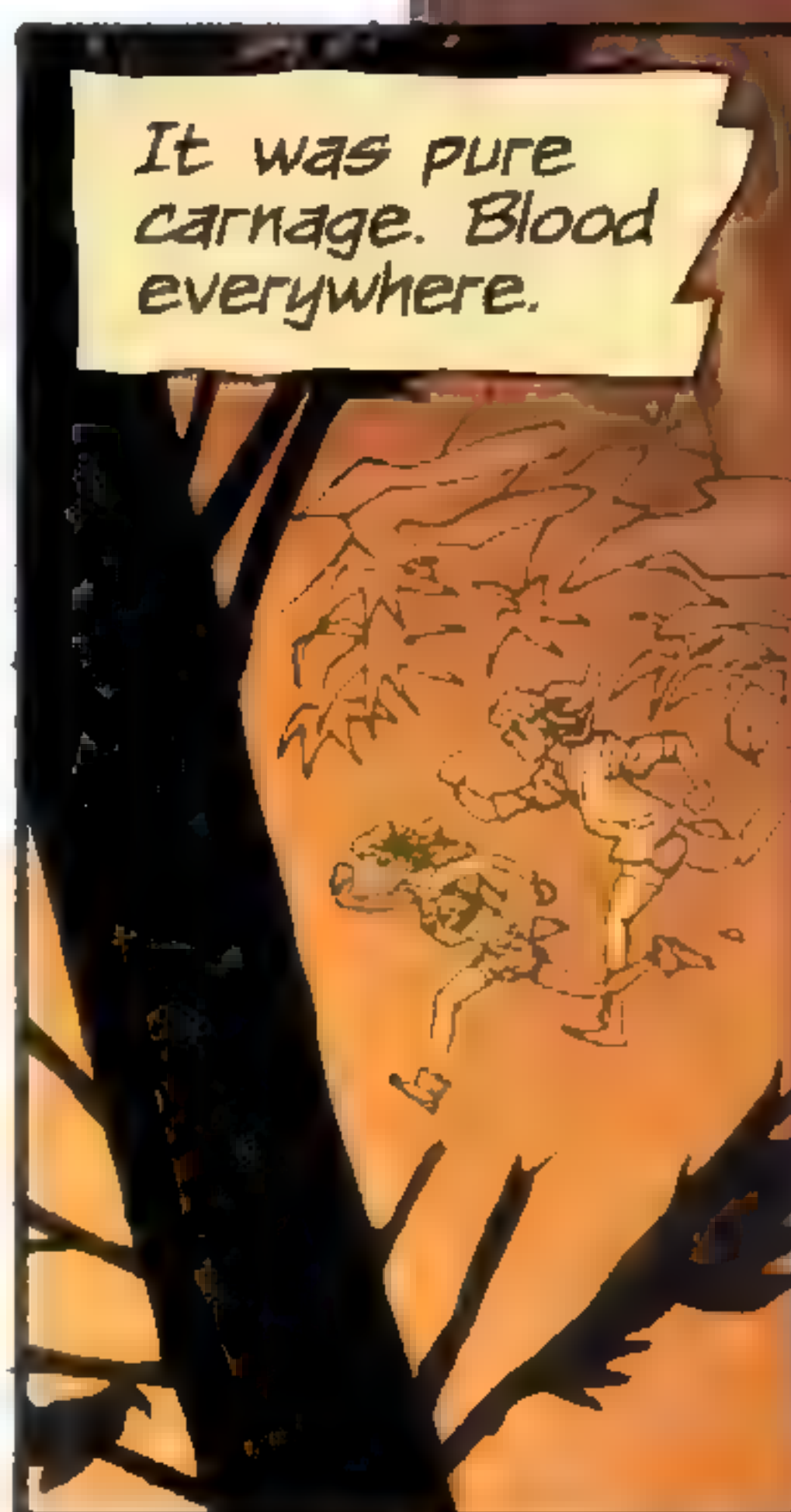
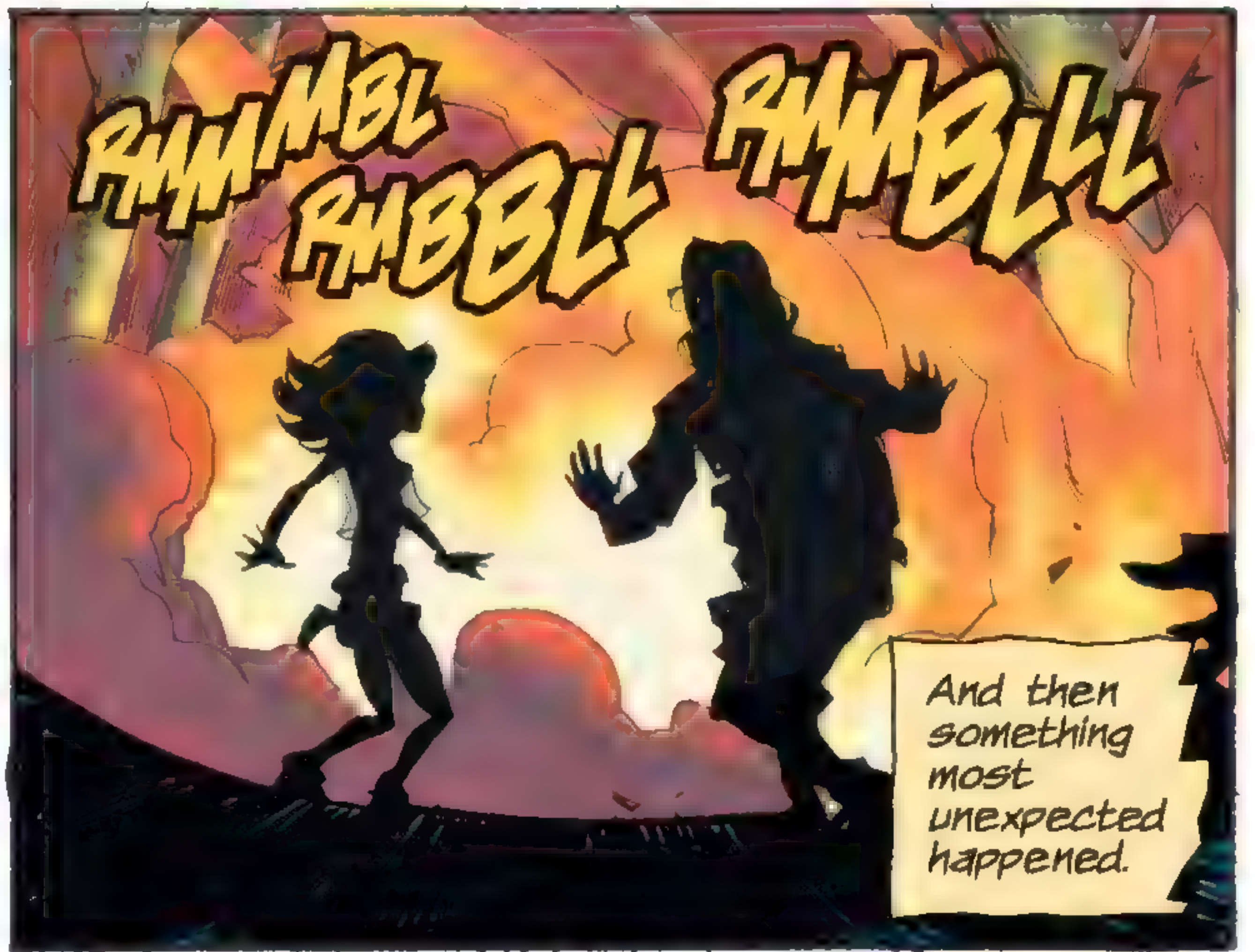
YOU CAN'T GO BACK! IT'S CERTAIN DEATH!



And then the old woman appeared...

...and went straight for the beasts







And then...

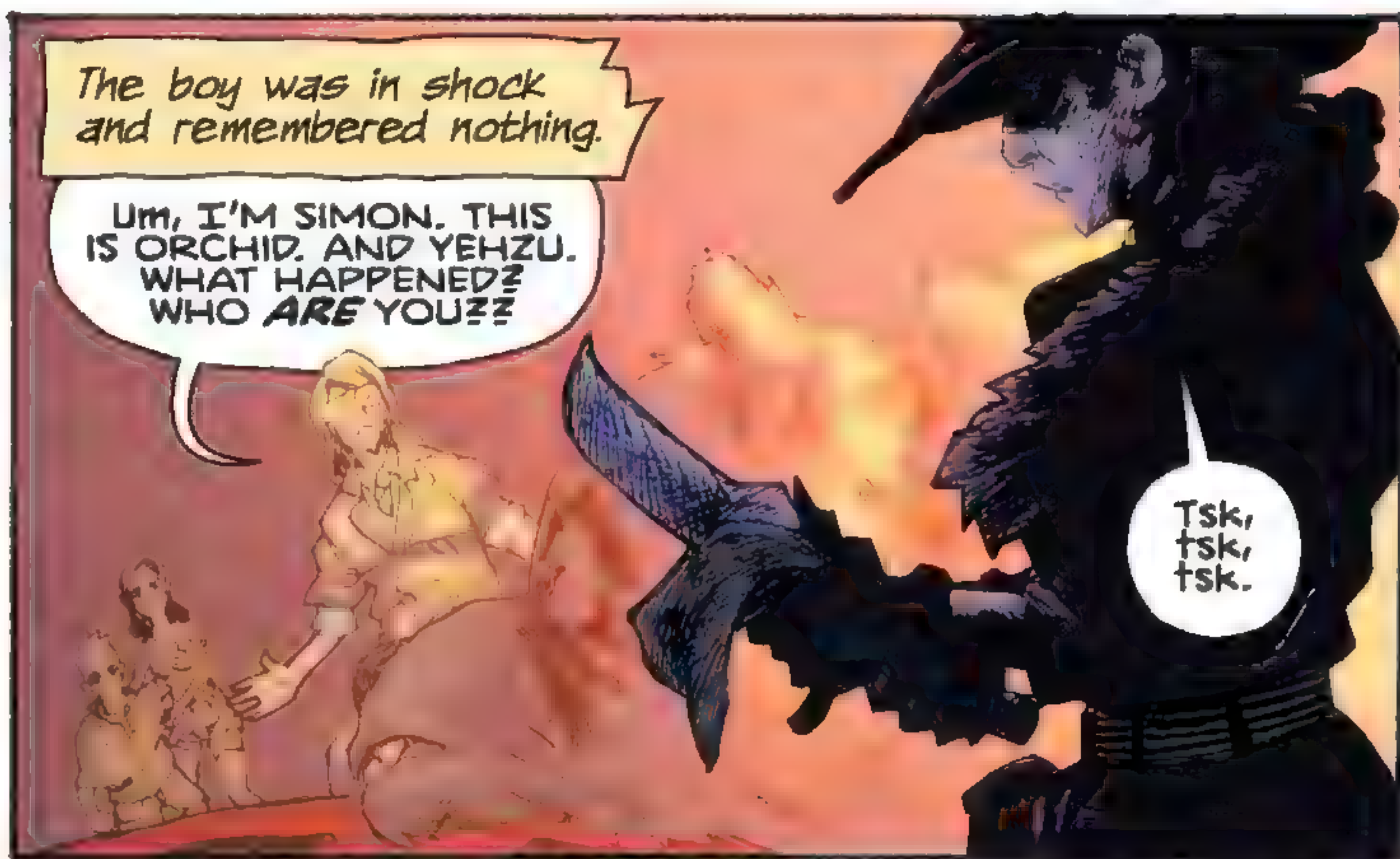
WELL, THAT'S CERTAINLY SOMETHING YOU DON'T SEE EVERY DAY.

We couldn't believe our eyes: Apparently, the old woman had somehow felled the creature and driven the others off. Impossible.

She casually skinned the beast, ignoring our presence.



≥Ahem≤
Umm...
HELLO?



The boy was in shock and remembered nothing.

Um, I'M SIMON. THIS IS ORCHID. AND YEHZU. WHAT HAPPENED? WHO ARE YOU??

Tsk, tsk, tsk.



And the strange old woman would shed no light.

COME, RADIUS... Bah ba bah boo... I THINK THEY SHOULD HAVE KEPT AN EYE ON THE LITTLE ONE, DON'T YOU? NOT A VERY SAFE PLACE TO LEAVE A LITTLE ONE BEHIND...



I then realized something was missing.

WE DID NOT LEAVE HIM BEHIND! HE MUST HAVE TRIPPED AND--

WAIT! WHERE'S THE MASK?! I HAD IT WHEN WE WERE IN THE TREES. MUST'VE FALLEN! OH NO! IT...IT...



IT SEEMS THEY LEFT THIS BEHIND TOO, RADIUS.

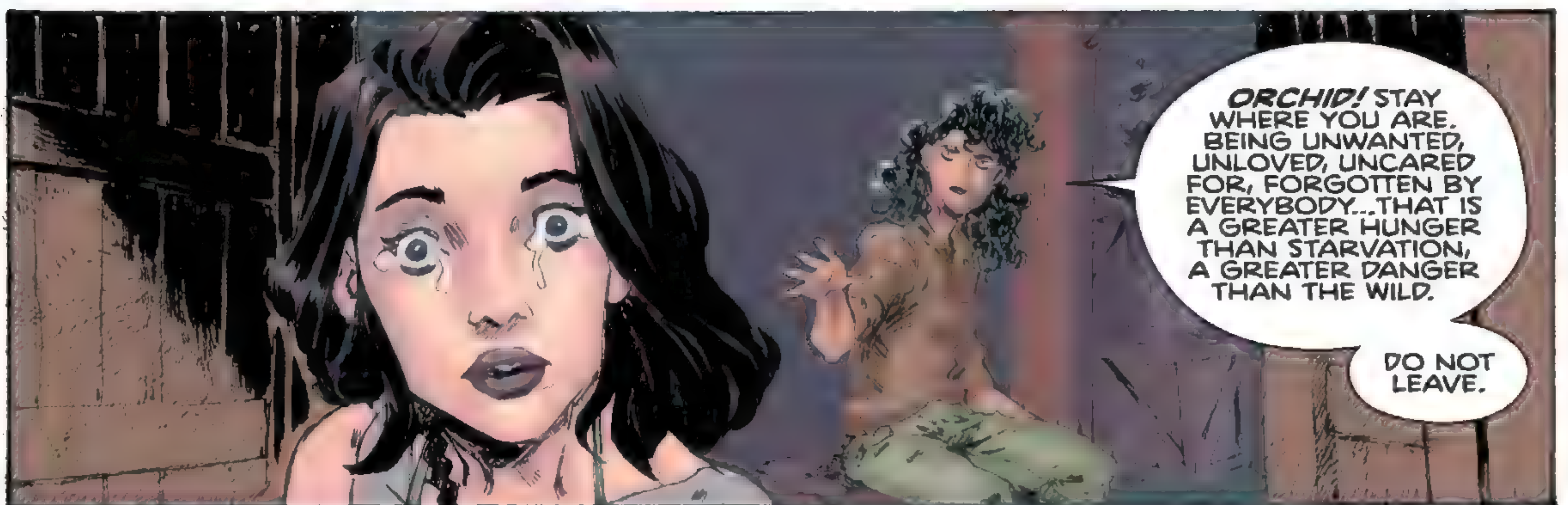
WHA--?



~Sigh~ WELL, IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE GOING TO HAVE GUESTS, RADIUS. DOES THAT BOTHER YOU MUCH, MY FRIEND? NO, YOUR SUPPER WILL NOT BE LATE. I'LL SEE TO THAT...

COME, YEHZU, I'LL HELP YOU...

OKAY, WAIT! YOU DIDN'T PUT THIS ON, DID YOU?! IS THAT HOW YOU...? ARE YOU A SAINT OR SOMETHING?! WHERE ARE YOU GOING? SLOW DOWN! CAN WE COME ALONG? HELLO! MA'AM? WHAT HAPPENED BACK THERE?!





I, TOO,
HAVE KNOWN
GREAT LOSS, GIRL--
LOSS THAT DOES
NOT LESSEN,
SORROW THAT
NEVER FADES.

I...*KNEW*
GENERAL CHINA.
I WAS...hmmm...
I WAS GENERAL
CHINA'S CONCUBINE.
HE WAS MY
LOVE.



OH YES,
SIMON, *THE*
GENERAL
CHINA
TO WHOM
YOUR MASK
BELONGED.

AND I
DID NOT
COME TO
THIS CABIN
BY ACCIDENT
OR DESIGN.
I AM HERE...
SERVING
PENANCE.



MY NAME
IS OPAL AND
I SURVIVED
THE CANNIBAL
BARGES.

"GENERATIONS. FOR GENERATIONS, THEY SAID,
WE WERE ADrift ON THE DERELICT STEAMER,
SURVIVING AMONG A LOST AND BRUTAL PEOPLE.



"WHEN RAM'S PLAGUE
TOOK MY PARENTS, I
WAS DEFENSELESS
AGAINST THE RAPE MOBS.



"BUT *KIMATHI*,
ONE OF THE
ELDERS, SAVED
MY LIFE...



"...AND
RAISED
ME AS HIS
OWN.

"KIMATHI WAS WISE BEYOND
MEASURE AND LOVED HIS SON
AND ME WITHOUT CONDITION."



REMEMBER, CHILDREN,
EVIL ENTERS LIKE A SPLINTER
AND SPREADS LIKE AN OAK
TREE. IN THE MOMENT OF
DECISION, WILL YOU PUT YOUR
CAUSE BEFORE YOUR LIFE, OR
YOUR LIFE BEFORE YOUR CAUSE?
NO ONE CAN CHOOSE FOR
YOU. ENOUGH FOR TODAY...

...OPAL, THERE IS A LITTLE SOUP
LEFT. I WILL EAT TOMORROW.



"KIMATHI'S SON, HIS NAME...
WAS *CHINA*. AND EVEN AS
A BOY, HE WAS CLEVER,
STRONG, AND RIGHTEOUS.

"CHINA AND
I BECAME
INSEPARABLE.



"AND AS THE YEARS PASSED, WE CARVED
MOMENTS OF HAPPINESS OUT OF
THE HELLISH LIFE ABOARD THE BARGE.

"UNTIL ONE DAY, THE
TIDES PULLED US
TOWARD AN
UNEXPECTED SIGHT...



"...LAND.

"THE PARADISE OF DRY LAND
HAD ONLY BEEN A FAIRY TALE.
AS WE WADED TO SHORE, ALL
WERE *THRILLED* TO SET FOOT
ON SOLID GROUND FOR THE
FIRST TIME.

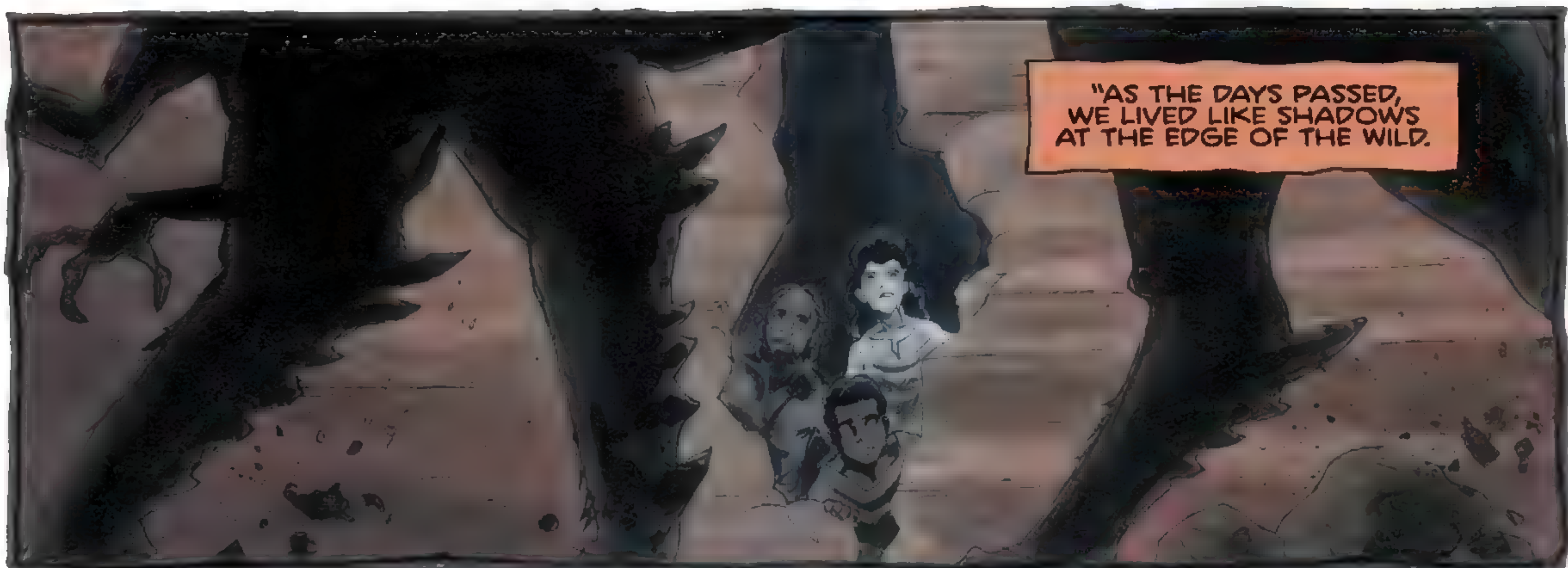
"BUT WE WERE
NOT ALONE..."

"WE WERE
TAKEN BY
SURPRISE,
OF COURSE.

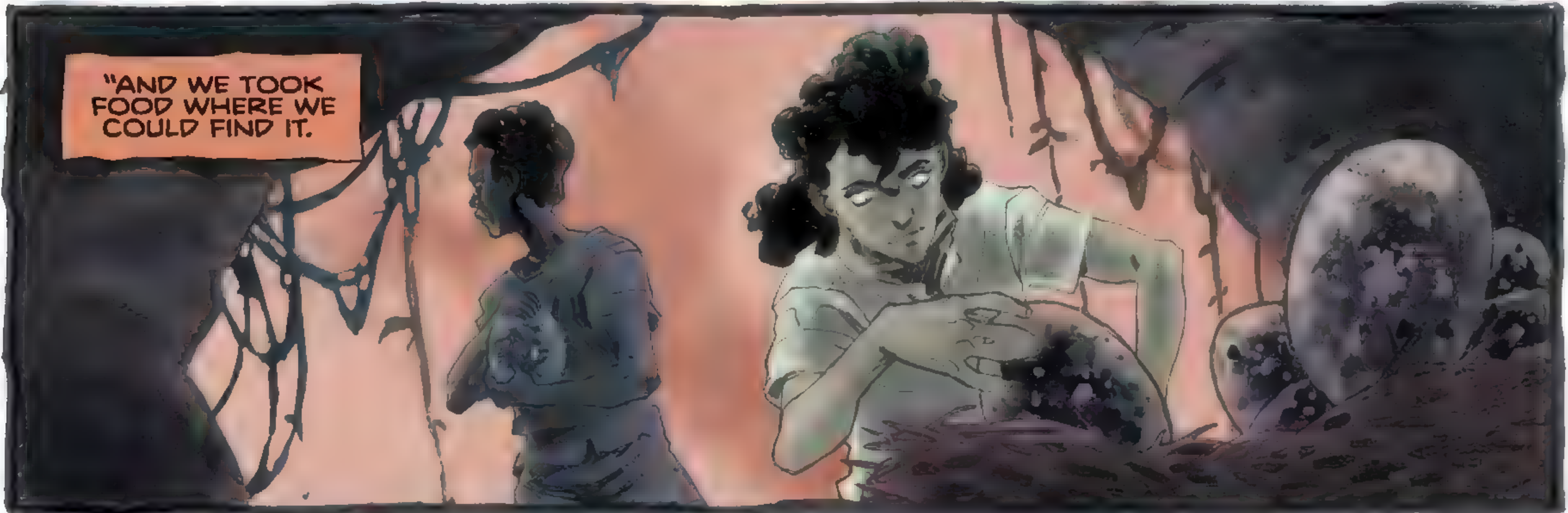
"AND THESE CREATURES
DID NOT APPEAR IN
THE FAIRY TALES.

"IT WAS ONLY
THROUGH
KIMATHI'S QUICK
THINKING THAT
WE ESCAPED THE
FIRST SWARM.

"BUT THE HUNT WENT
ON AND ON. WE
THOUGHT...WE WERE
SAFE. BUT THAT DAY...
AFTER ALL WE'D BEEN
THROUGH...I LOST...
THAT DAY WE, UMM...
WE...*sigh*... ALMOST
LOST OUR LIVES.



"AS THE DAYS PASSED,
WE LIVED LIKE SHADOWS
AT THE EDGE OF THE WILD.



"AND WE TOOK
FOOD WHERE WE
COULD FIND IT.



"WE SURVIVED
BECAUSE WE HAD
EACH OTHER. WE
EXISTED *FOR*
EACH OTHER.



"BUT OVER
TIME, KIMATHI
GREW...UNWELL..



"IT...IT WAS MORE
THAN OLD AGE
THAT TOOK ITS
TOLL ON HIM.



"AND THEN OUR
WORLD CAME
UNDONE."

GARRH!
STAY RIGHT
THERE, OLD
MAN!!

ZODOR
WILL BE PLEASED
WITH *THIS* NICE
FIND!

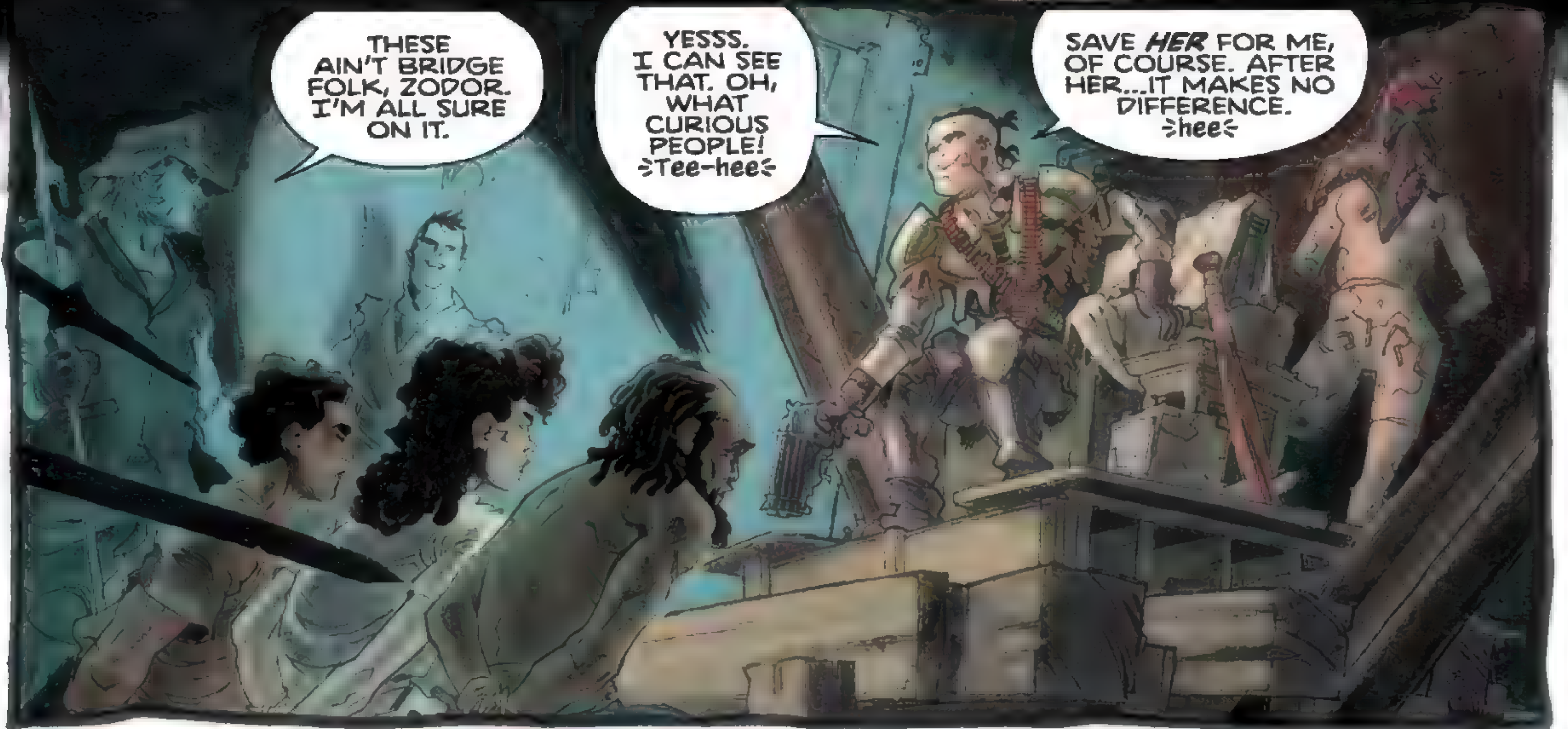
HA!

HA HAA
HAAH!





"A CRUEL BAND OF SCAVENGERS,
THUGS OF A PETTY WARLORD,
INTRODUCED US TO 'CIVILIZATION.'"



THESE
AIN'T BRIDGE
FOLK, ZODOR.
I'M ALL SURE
ON IT.

YESSS.
I CAN SEE
THAT. OH,
WHAT
CURIOUS
PEOPLE!
=Tee-hee=

SAVE *HER* FOR ME,
OF COURSE. AFTER
HER...IT MAKES NO
DIFFERENCE.
=hee=



"THE LEADER OF THE
BRIGANDS HAD A RARE
CAPTIVE TREASURE..."

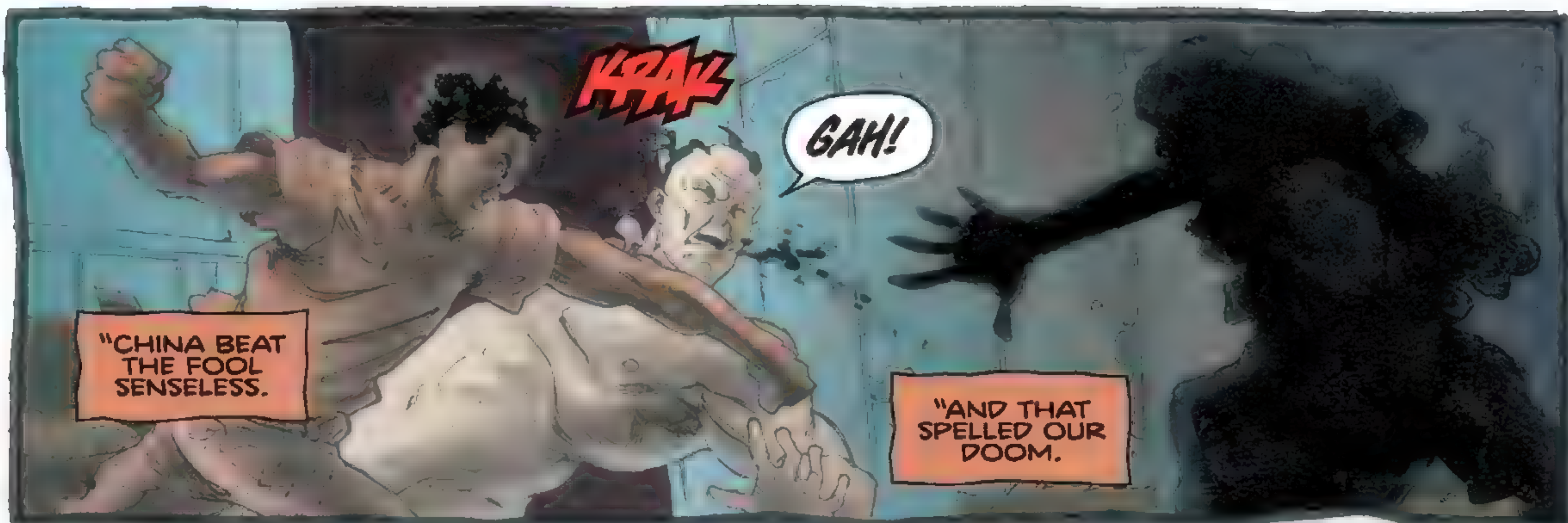
"A YOUNG COLT, A CREATURE FROM THE
ANCIENT WORLD. BARGE MASTERS MUST
HAVE PRESERVED HIS LINE THROUGH
CENTURIES AT SEA. INCREDIBLE. A *REAL*
HORSE. I NAMED THE GENTLE SOUL RADIUS.

"BUT THE
ANIMAL
HAD BEEN
HORRIBLY
ABUSED,
WHIPPED, AND
DESPOILED.



"AND I WAS
TO BE NEXT..."

NOW,
=hee-hee=
LET'S PLAY,
PRETTY.







"THE WORLD OF THE BRIDGE PEOPLE BEGAN TO CHANGE."

"WHEREVER THE INNOCENT WERE THREATENED..."

TOMO WOLFE DEMANDS HIS TAXES! IT'S SIMPLE, GREENFOOT SCUM...IF YOU DON'T PAY, YOU DIE!



BLAM

BLAM

"...CHINA WAS THERE."



"THE SLAVE TRADERS LEARNED TO FEAR HIS NAME..."



"...AND THE SOLDIERS OF TOMO WOLFE BELIEVED HE WAS NOT HUMAN, BUT A GRIM APPARITION..."



"...A GHOSTLY AVENGER OF THEIR VICTIMS."

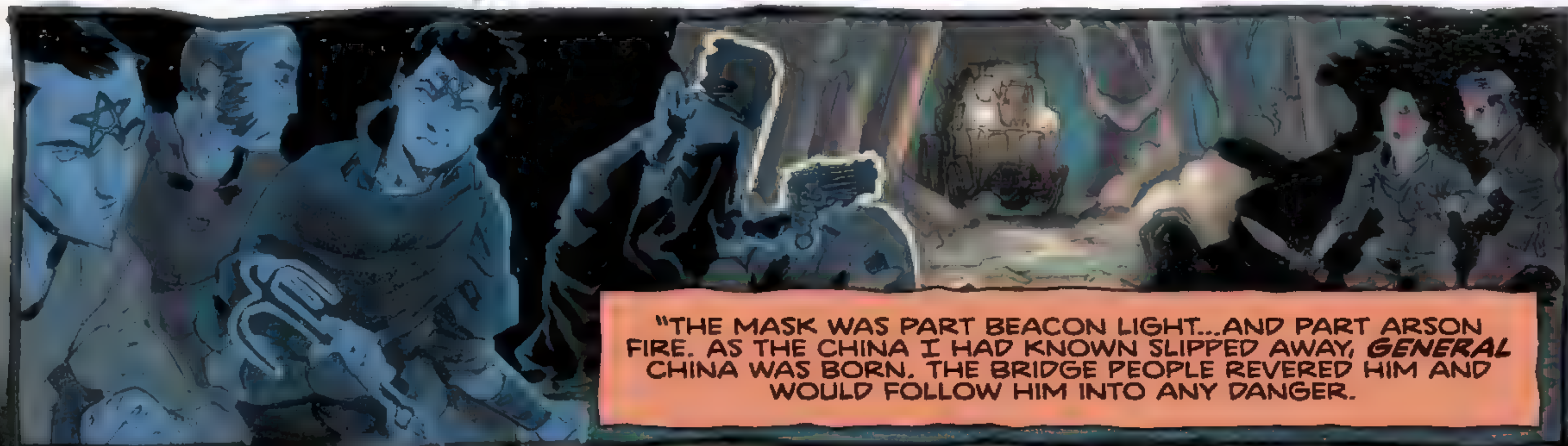
SHUKK

AH!



"AND PERHAPS THAT IS WHAT HE HAD BECOME."

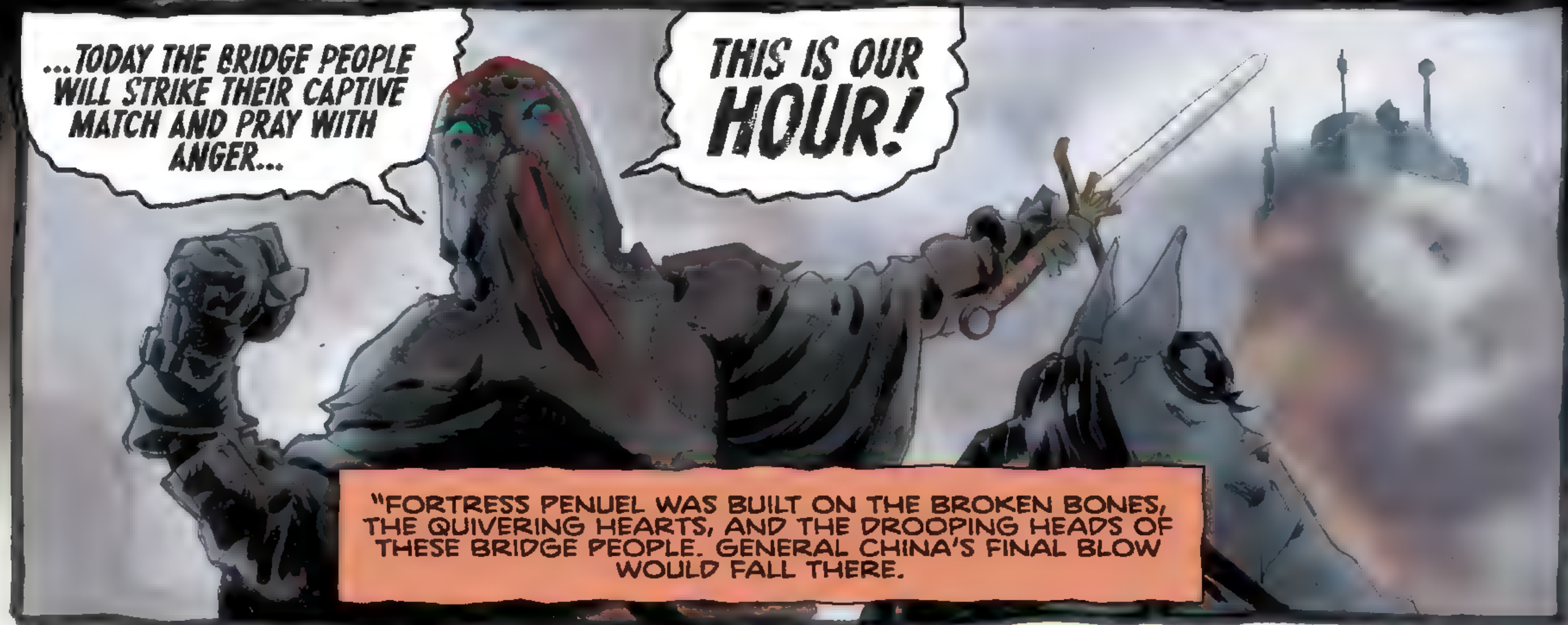
"FROM THE MOMENT CHINA DONNED THE MASK...HE WAS NEVER THE SAME. CHINA WAS **INHABITED**...BY I KNOW NOT WHAT."



"THE MASK WAS PART BEACON LIGHT...AND PART ARSON FIRE. AS THE CHINA I HAD KNOWN SLIPPED AWAY, **GENERAL CHINA** WAS BORN. THE BRIDGE PEOPLE REVERED HIM AND WOULD FOLLOW HIM INTO ANY DANGER."



"THEY BELIEVED THEY HAD FOUND A DELIVERER."



"...TODAY THE BRIDGE PEOPLE WILL STRIKE THEIR CAPTIVE MATCH AND PRAY WITH ANGER..."

THIS IS OUR HOUR!

"FORTRESS PENUEL WAS BUILT ON THE BROKEN BONES, THE QUIVERING HEARTS, AND THE DROOPING HEADS OF THESE BRIDGE PEOPLE. GENERAL CHINA'S FINAL BLOW WOULD FALL THERE."

"WE STOOD SOLIDLY
TOGETHER. THOUSANDS
MARCHED LIKE ONE
GREAT BODY.

"WHATEVER CHINA AND
I HAD BETWEEN US WAS
LOST IN THE WIND OF
BATTLE. MY **GREAT LOVE**
WAS NOW A SPIRIT OF
LIGHTNING AND ANGER.



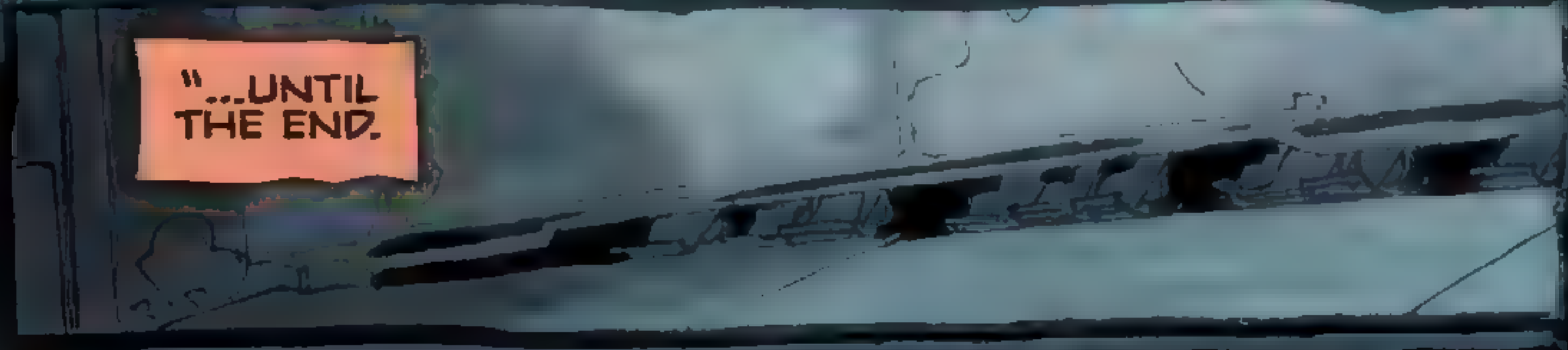
"AND OUR RULERS
WERE AFRAID OF
THE MARROW IN
THEIR OWN BONES.

"OR SO WE
THOUGHT.

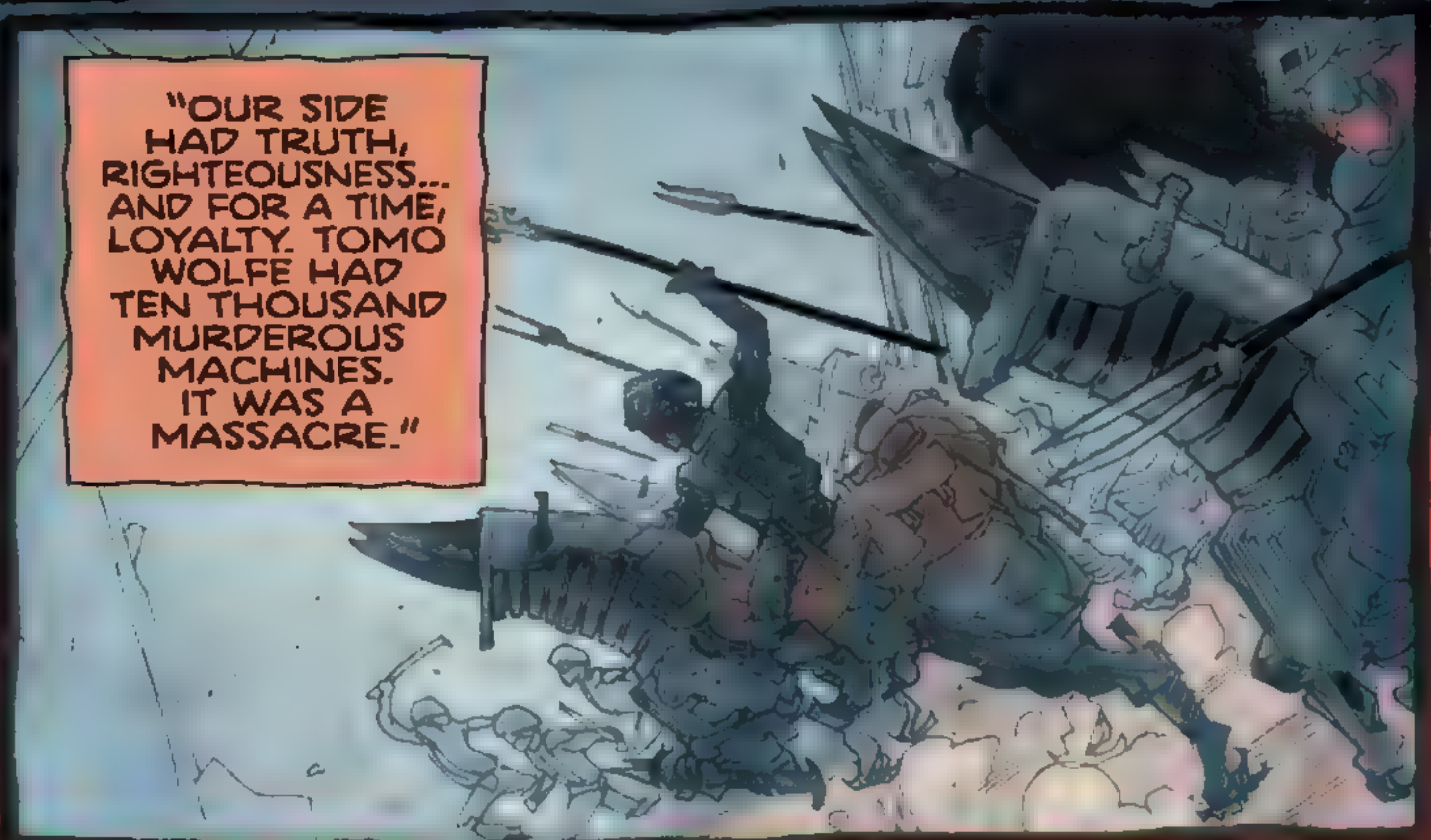
"I FOUGHT SIDE
BY SIDE WITH
THE GENERAL...



"...UNTIL
THE END.



"OUR SIDE
HAD TRUTH,
RIGHTEOUSNESS...
AND FOR A TIME,
LOYALTY. TOMO
WOLFE HAD
TEN THOUSAND
MURDEROUS
MACHINES.
IT WAS A
MASSACRE."



WRGH!

HGGG!

AAGH!





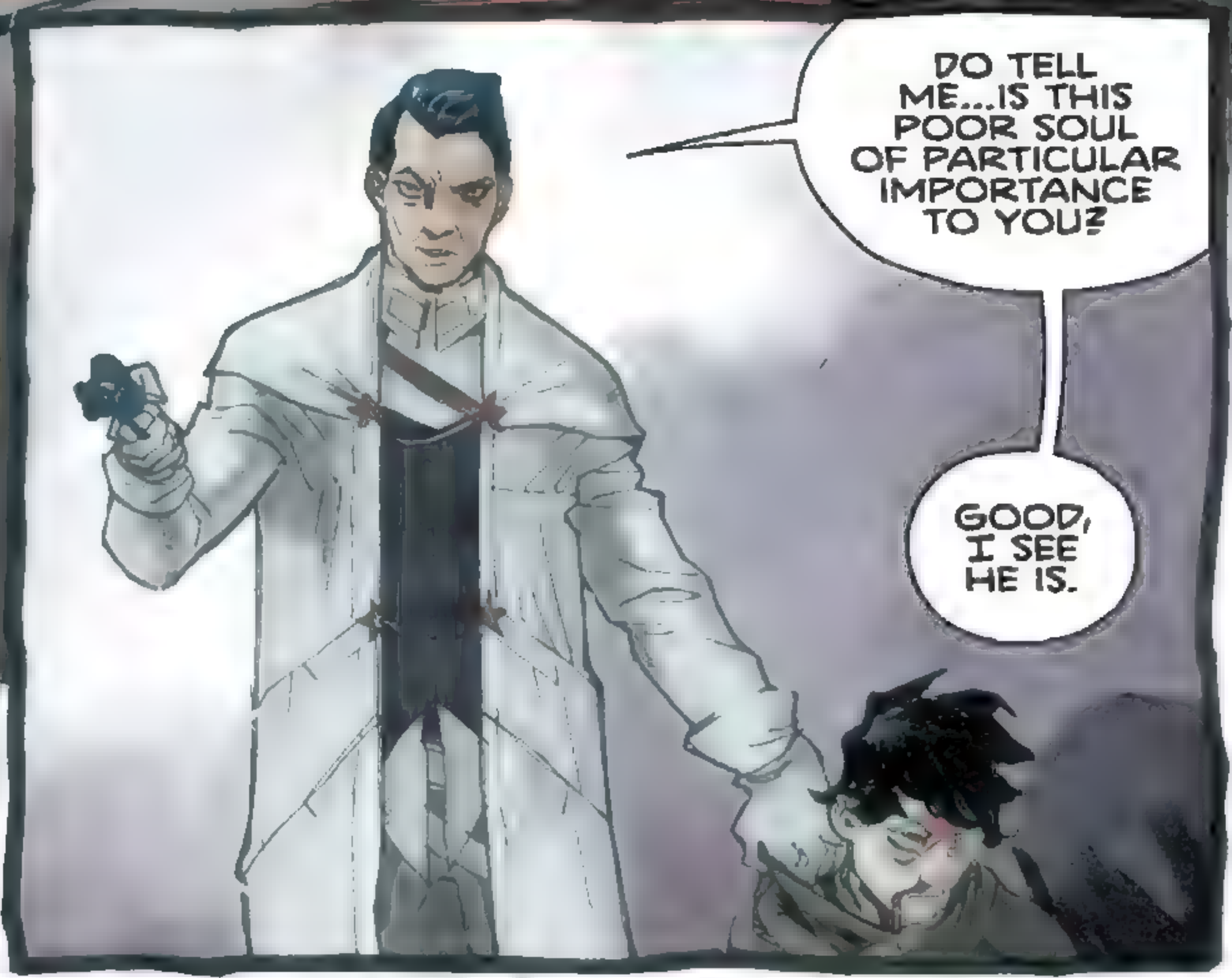
"BUT WOLFE WAS NOT CONTENT WITH A MILITARY VICTORY."

"TO CRUSH THE REBELLION, HE HAD TO BREAK GENERAL CHINA'S WILL."



BEGONE, MY BRAVE SOLDIERS. LEAVE US.

I'M PLEASED TO MAKE YOUR ACQUAINTANCE, "GENERAL" CHINA. YOU HAVE CAUSED ME...SOME CONCERN.



DO TELL ME...IS THIS POOR SOUL OF PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE TO YOU?

GOOD, I SEE HE IS.




I AM NOT THE BLOODTHIRSTY **MONSTER** SOME WOULD MAKE ME OUT TO BE. I AM A LEADER...LIKE YOURSELF. I AM MAKING YOU AN OFFER.



I AM WILLING TO CALL AN END TO THESE SENSELESS HOSTILITIES. I WILL SPARE THE LIVES OF EVERY MAN, WOMAN, AND CHILD ON THE BATTLEFIELD. I'LL EVEN SPARE **YOUR** LIFE, GENERAL, BUT YOU MUST DO ONE SMALL THING.



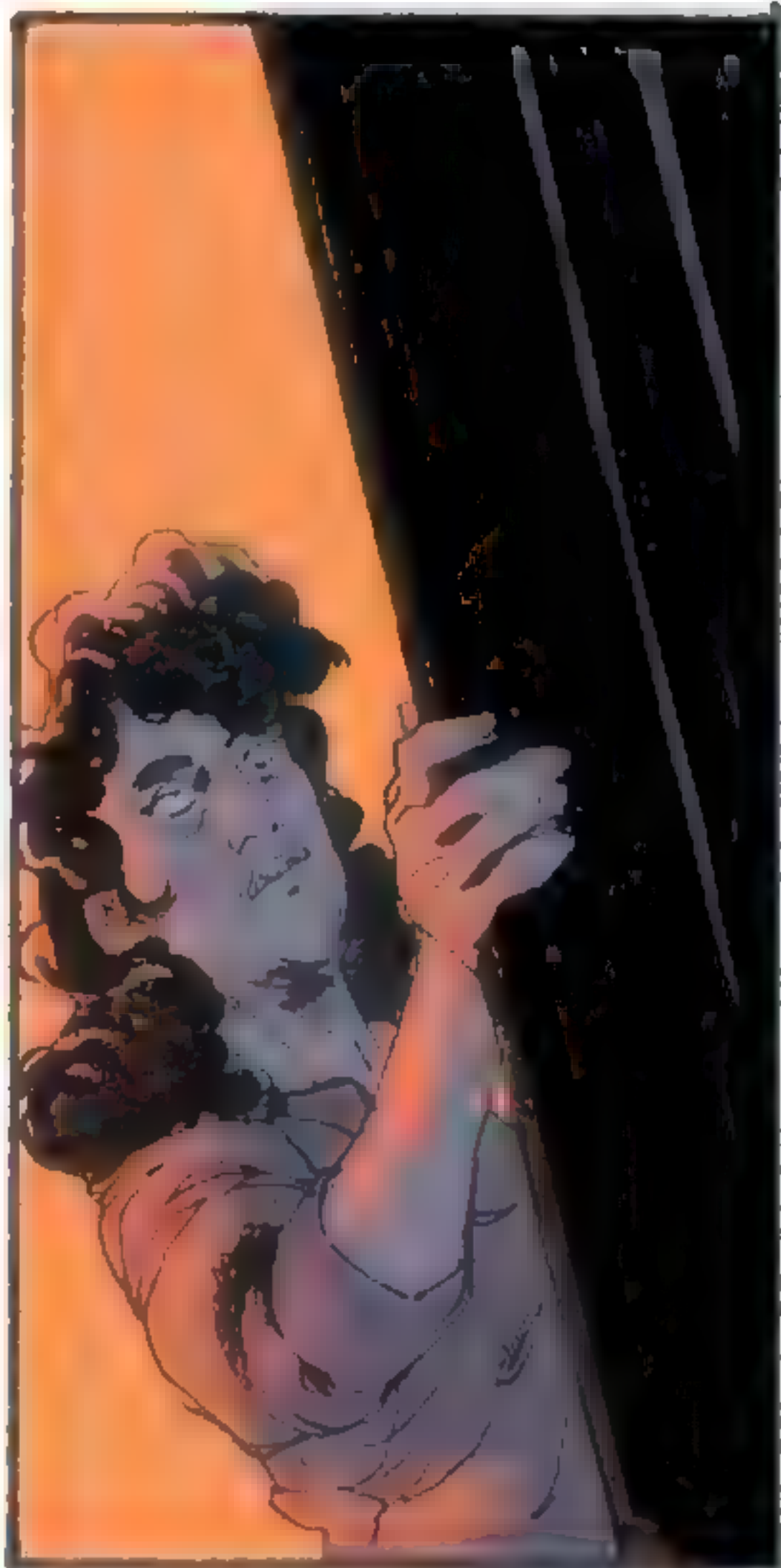
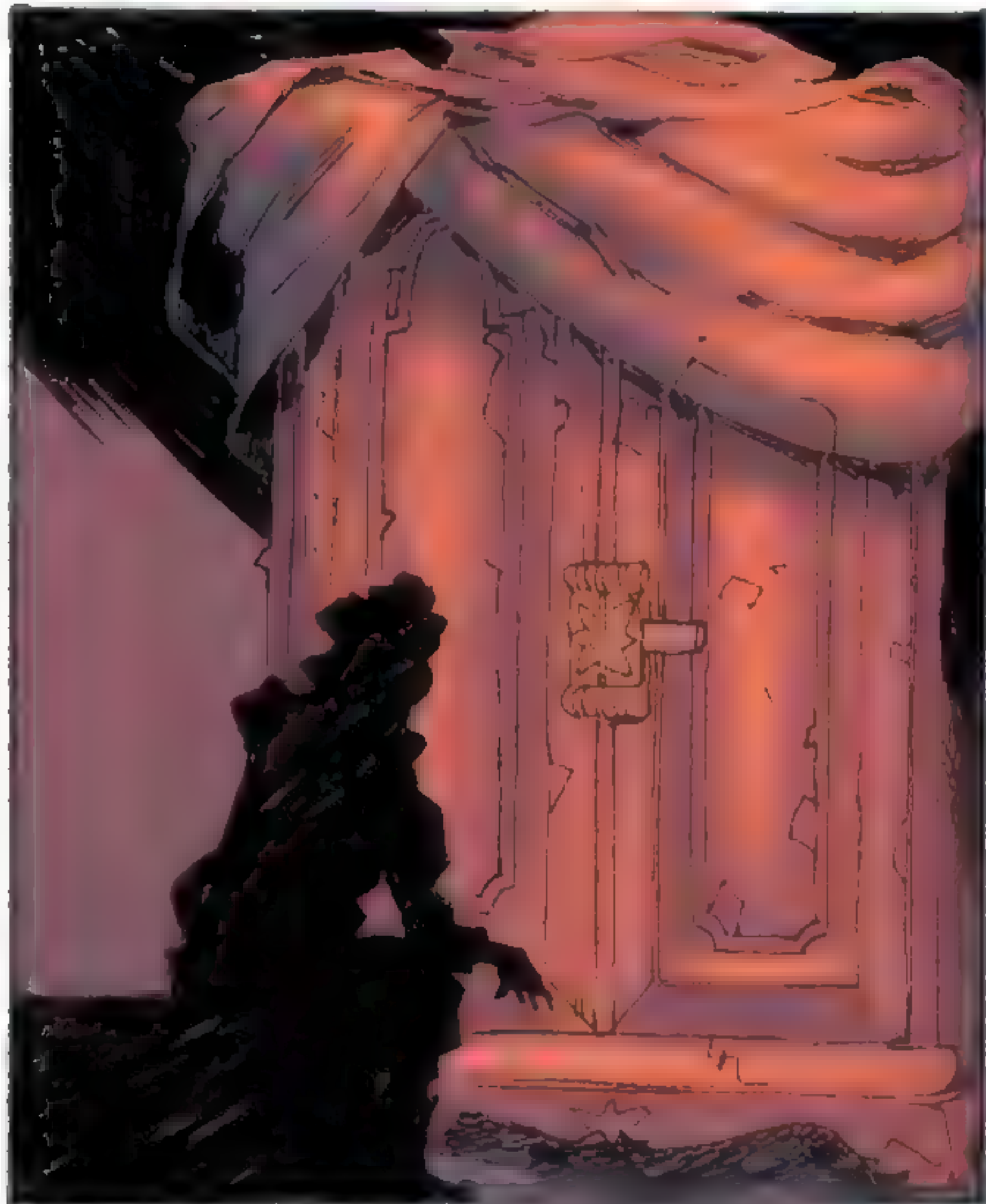
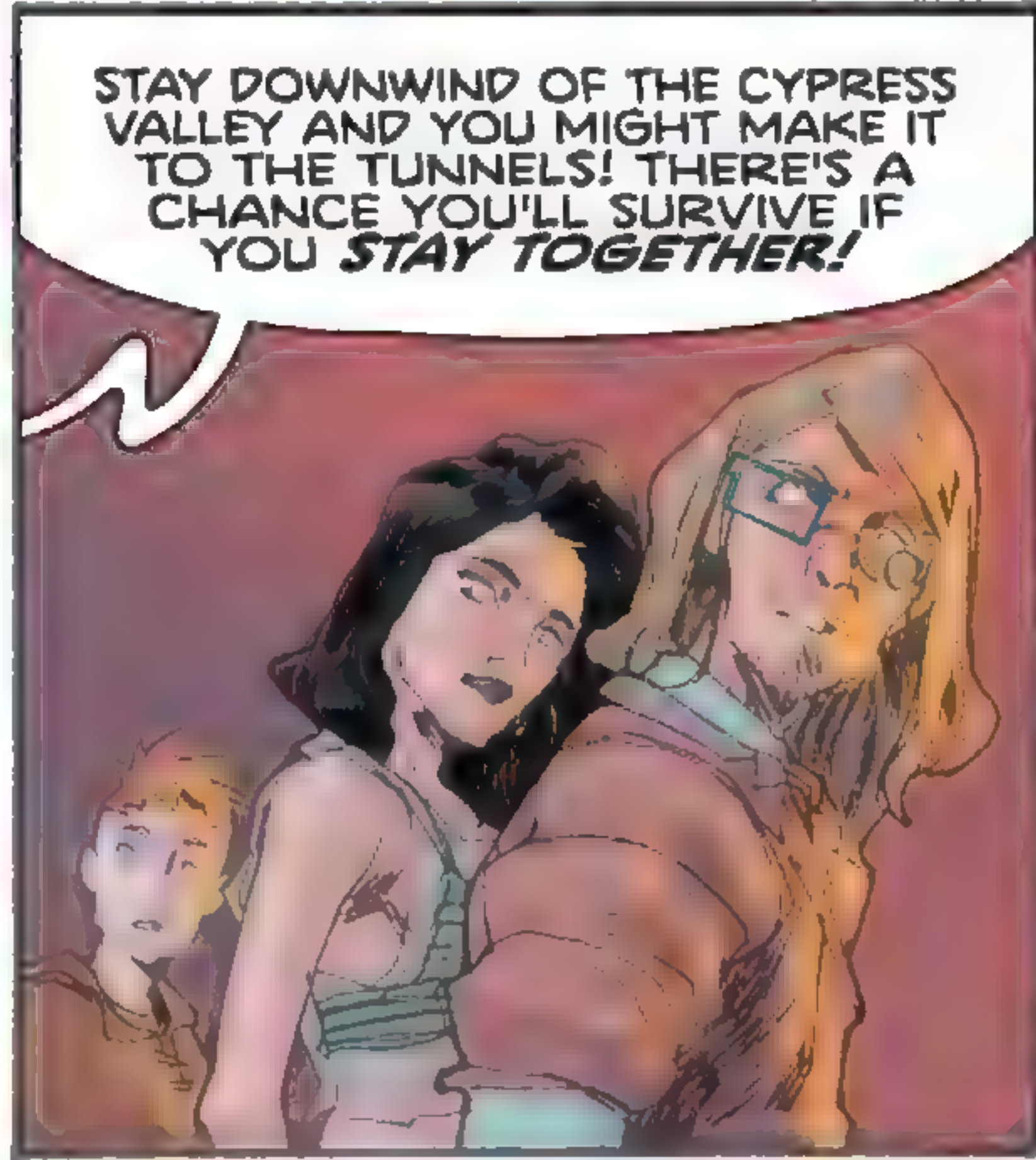
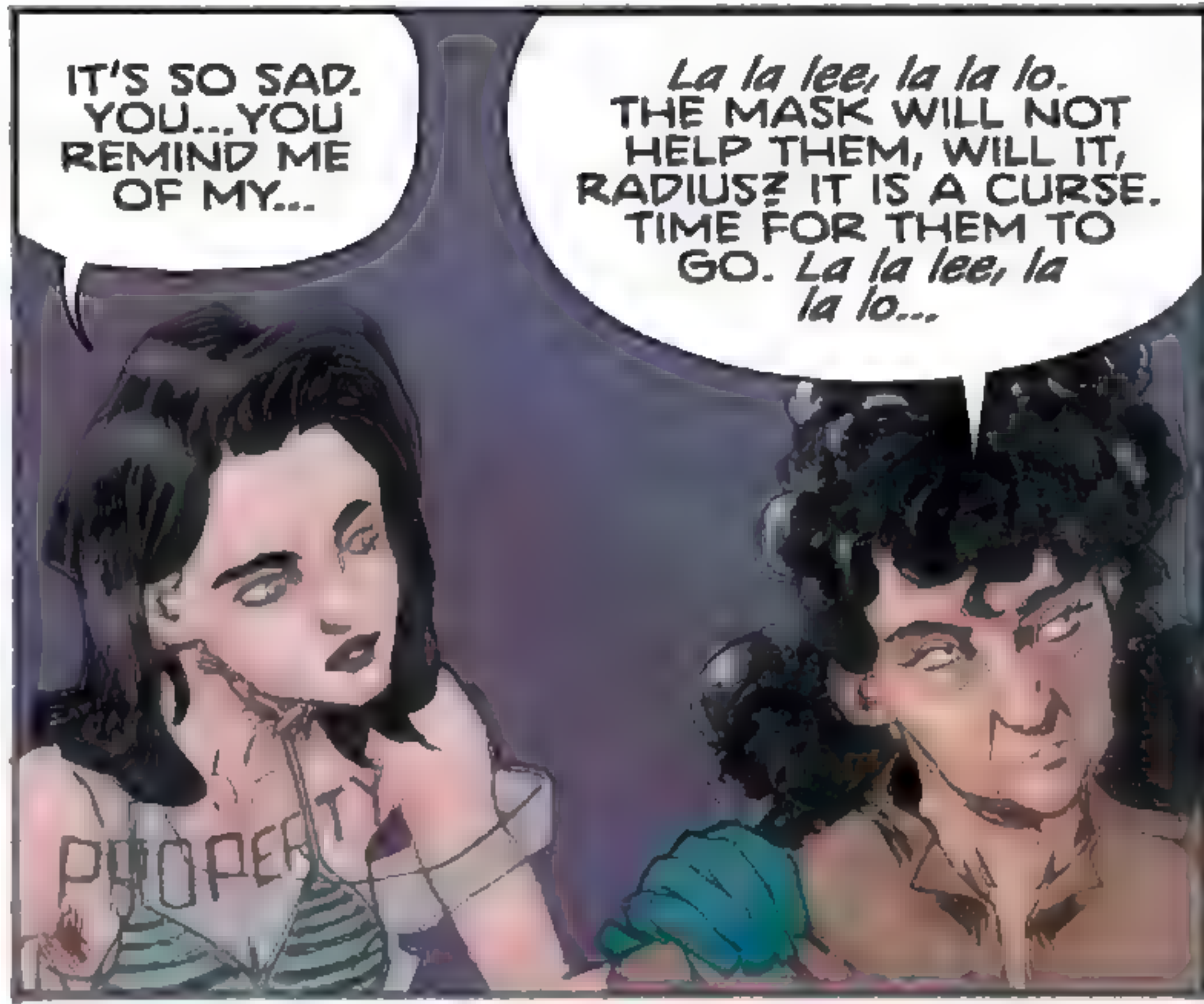
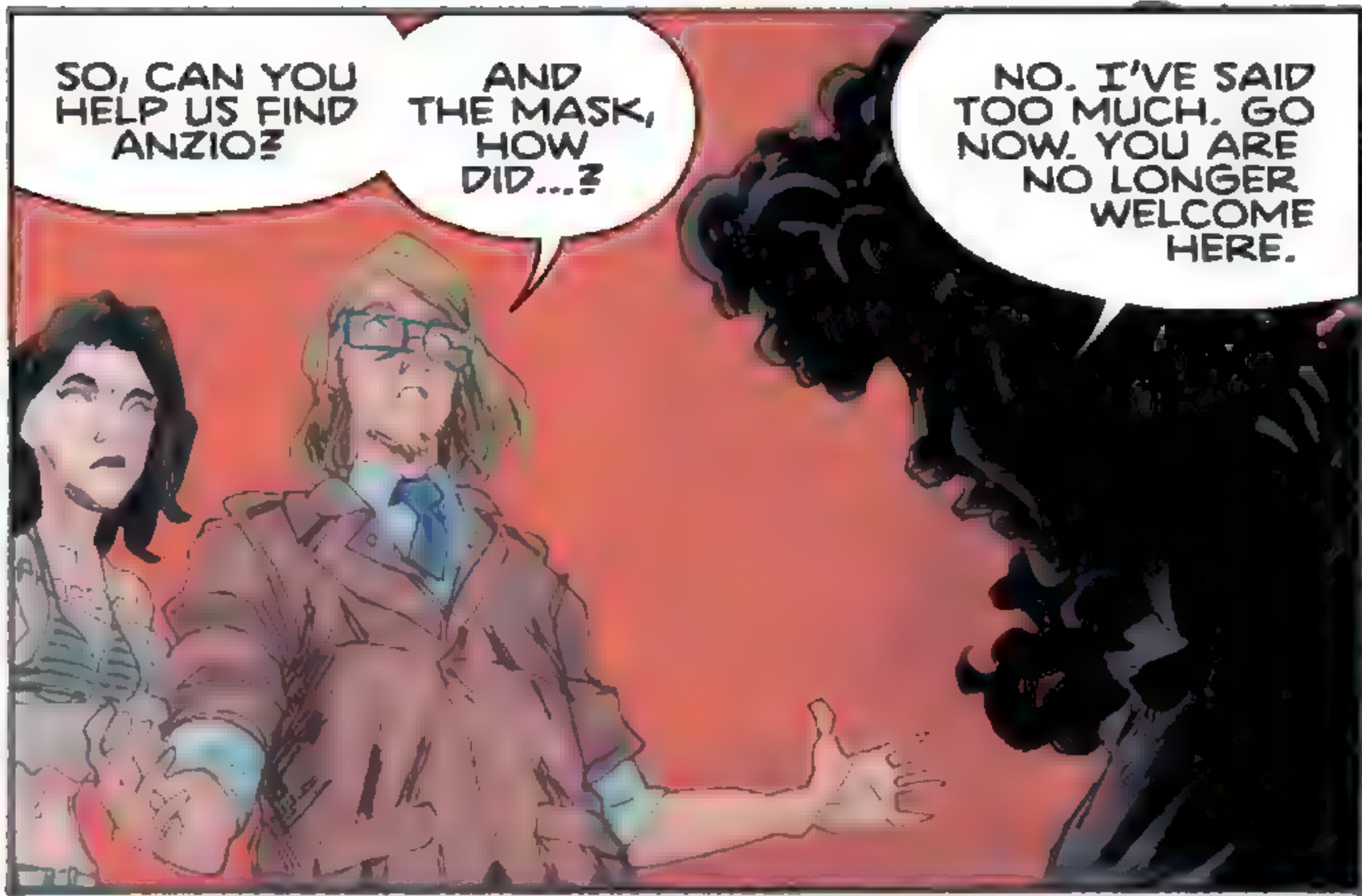


"TOMO
WOLFE
LIED.

"GENERAL CHINA
DIED THAT DAY,
ANONYMOUS AND
DISGRACED...JUST
ANOTHER NAMELESS
HUSK AMONG THE
THOUSANDS. HE
BETRAYED HIMSELF--
HE BETRAYED ALL
OF US. THE UPRISING
WAS FINISHED.

"TO LOSE THE BATTLE, TO
LOSE THE WAR, WAS A
TERRIBLE THING. BUT TO
LOSE YOURSELF...IF YOU
REALLY LOSE YOURSELF...
YOU ARE GONE FOREVER.

"I FLED INTO THE WILD
WITH RADIUS. I'LL SPEND
THE REST OF MY LIFE HERE,
IN ISOLATION AND SHAME--
EACH DAY A PENANCE FOR
ALL THOSE LIVES WASTED
WITH NOTHING GAINED."





DID YOU HEAR THAT?!

HUSH! JUST KEEP MOVING.



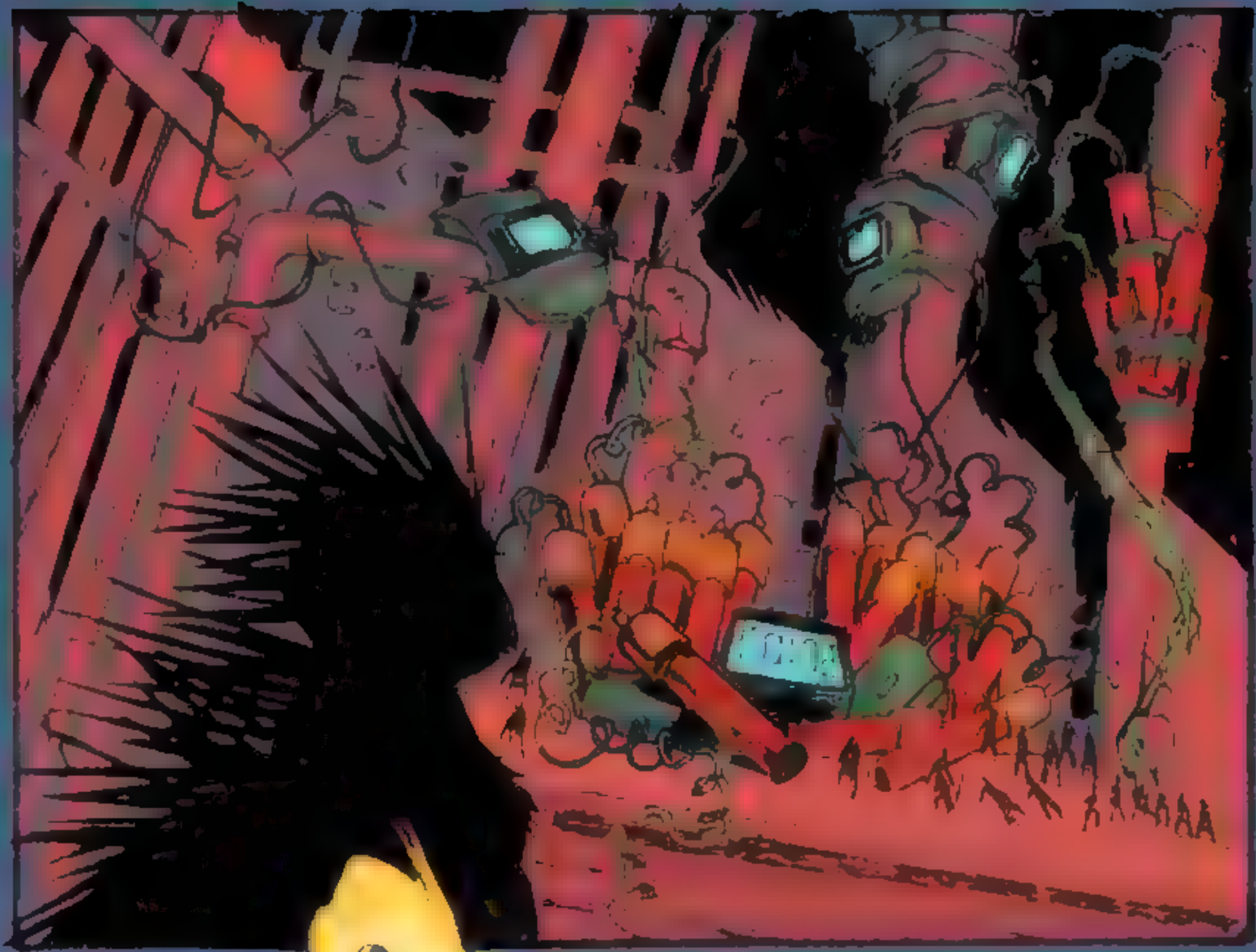
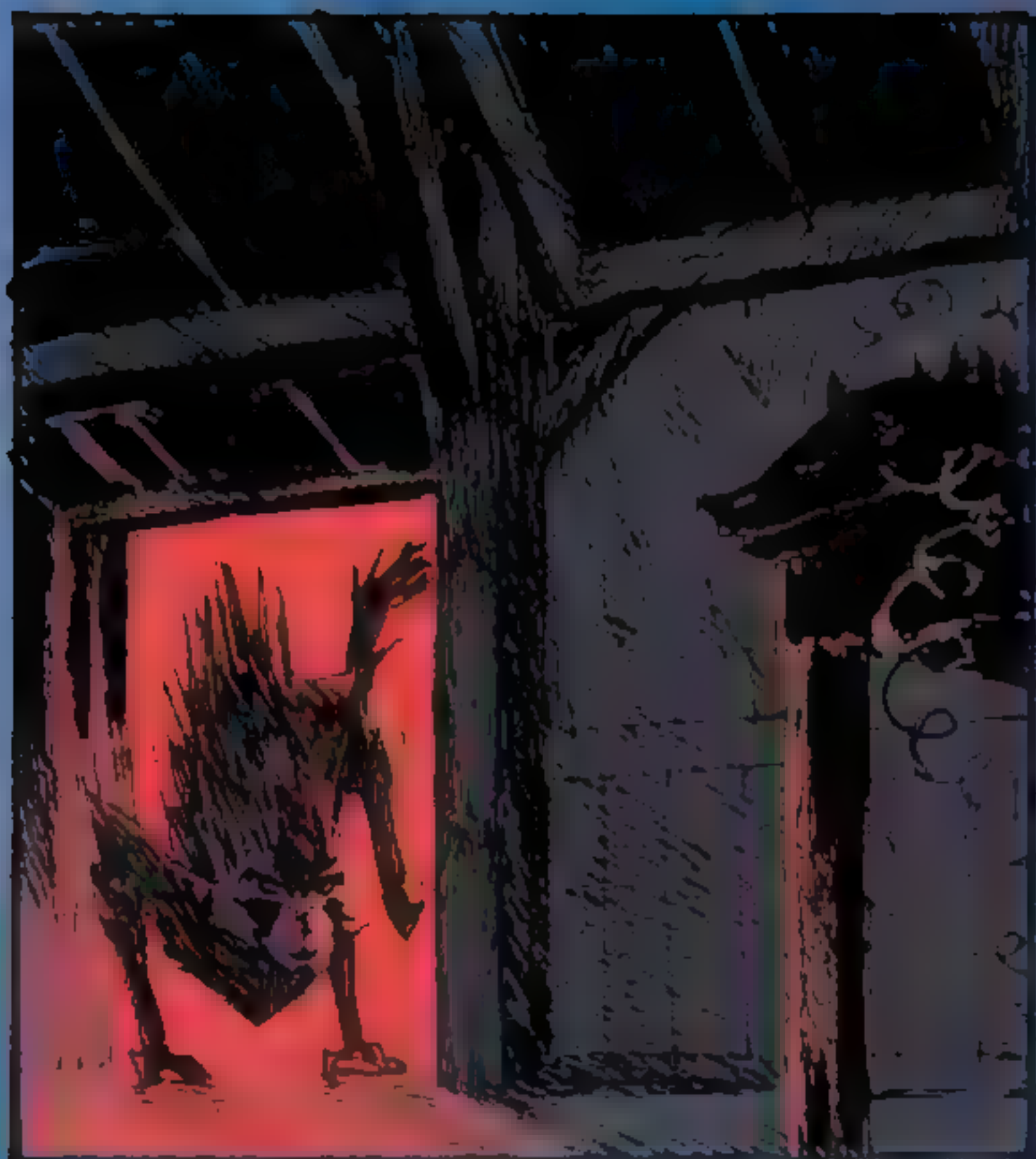
A HORSE JUST IS, AND I JUST AM, AND NEITHER CAN BE THE OTHER. AND EACH CAN SURVIVE, BUT MUCH IS BETTER...



...IN THE COMPANY OF ONE ANOTHER.



THIS MUST BE THE ENTRANCE TO THE TUNNELS...



I'M
COMING
WITH
YOU.

PROPERTY



**FORTRESS
PENUEL.**

MY DEAR DON
GLETKIN... YOU
KNOW WHY I'VE
SUMMONED
YOU.

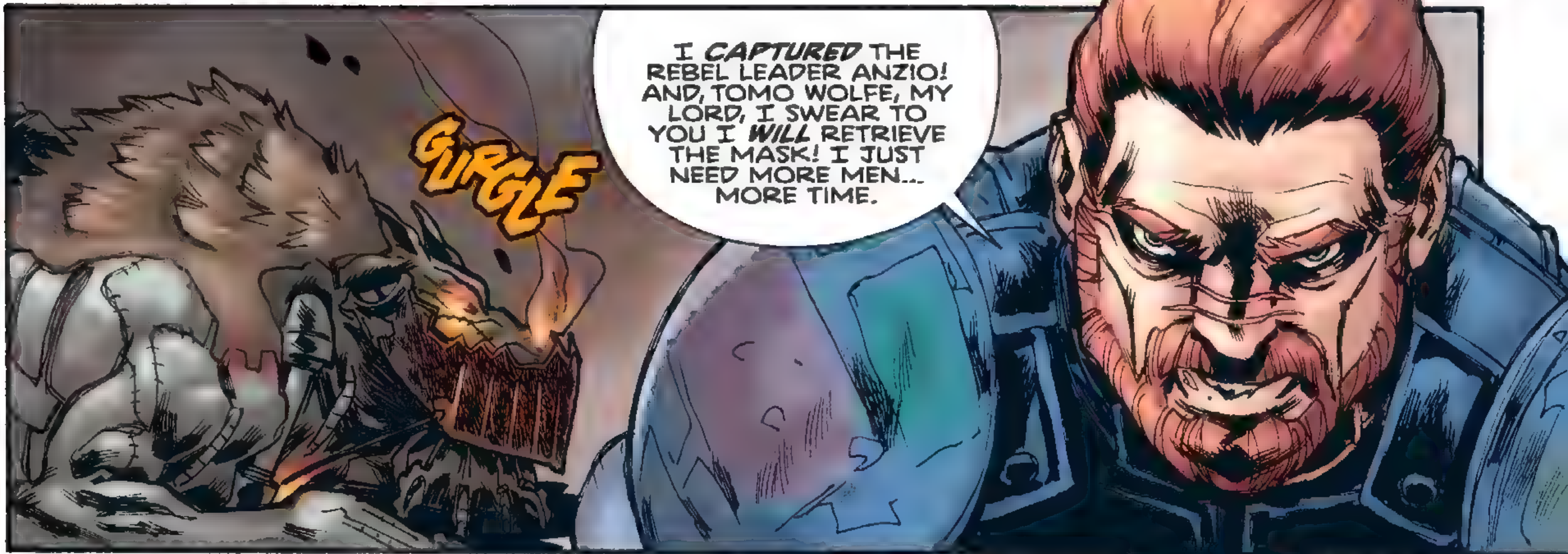
BUT FIRST... YOU SEEM
TO HAVE SHOWN UP
FOR THIS MEETING
WITH A SOMEWHAT
DISHEVELED LOOK...
YES, ESPECIALLY
AROUND THE COLLAR.
A *CLEAR* BREACH
OF PROTOCOL.

PERHAPS
YOU HAVE BEEN
PUSHING BOULDERS
AROUND THE PITS
OF PENUEL TO ATONE
FOR YOUR *FAILURE*
TO RETRIEVE THE
MASK, hmmm?

THE MASK WORN BY THE
VANQUISHED GENERAL CHINA?
*MY PRIZED POSSESSION?!
THE MASK *STOLEN* FROM
UNDER YOUR SCABBY
NOSE?*

THEY TELL ME
YOU ACTUALLY
HAD IT IN
YOUR HANDS...
NO?

NO!
WELL,
YES...
BUT...

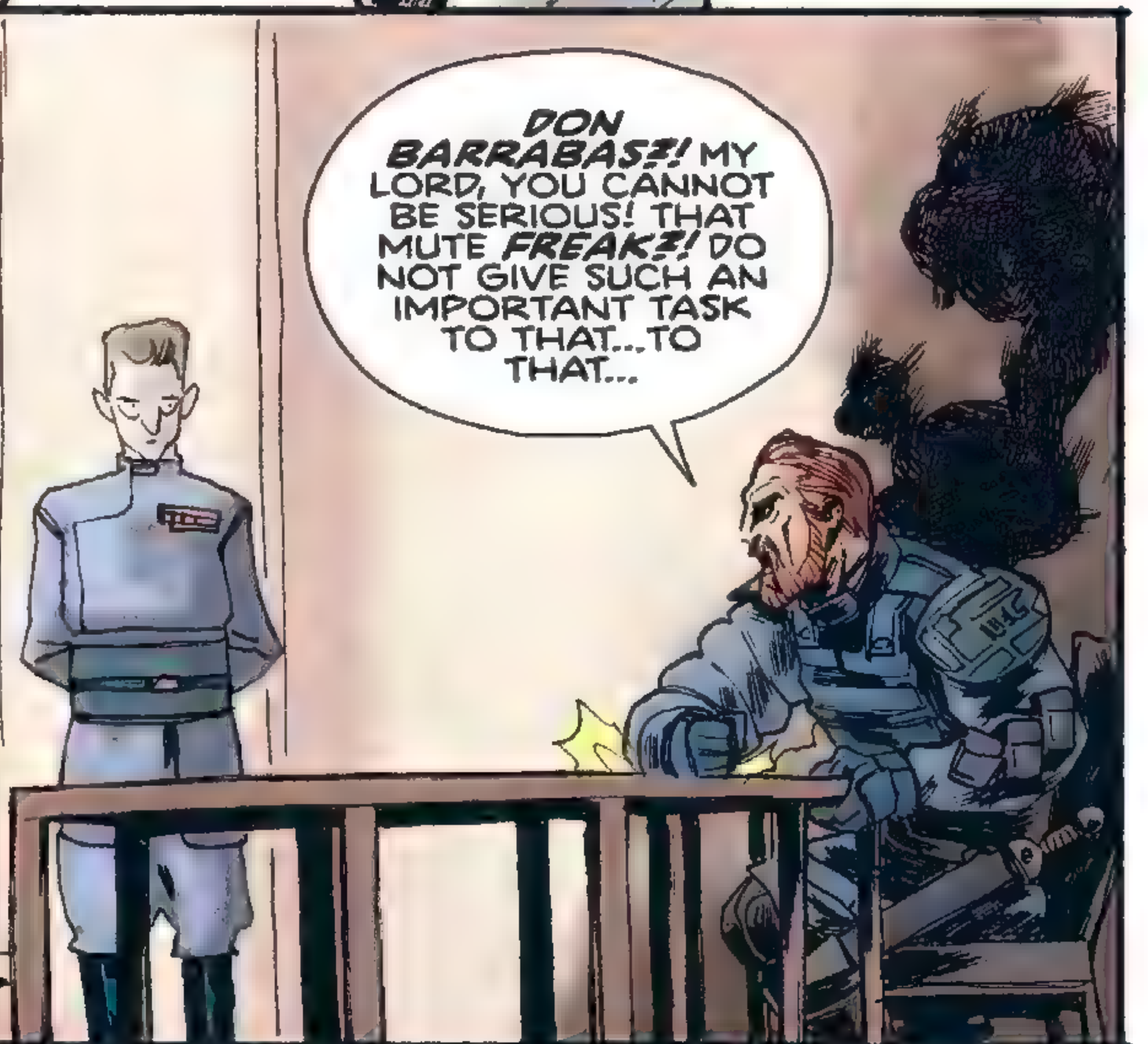
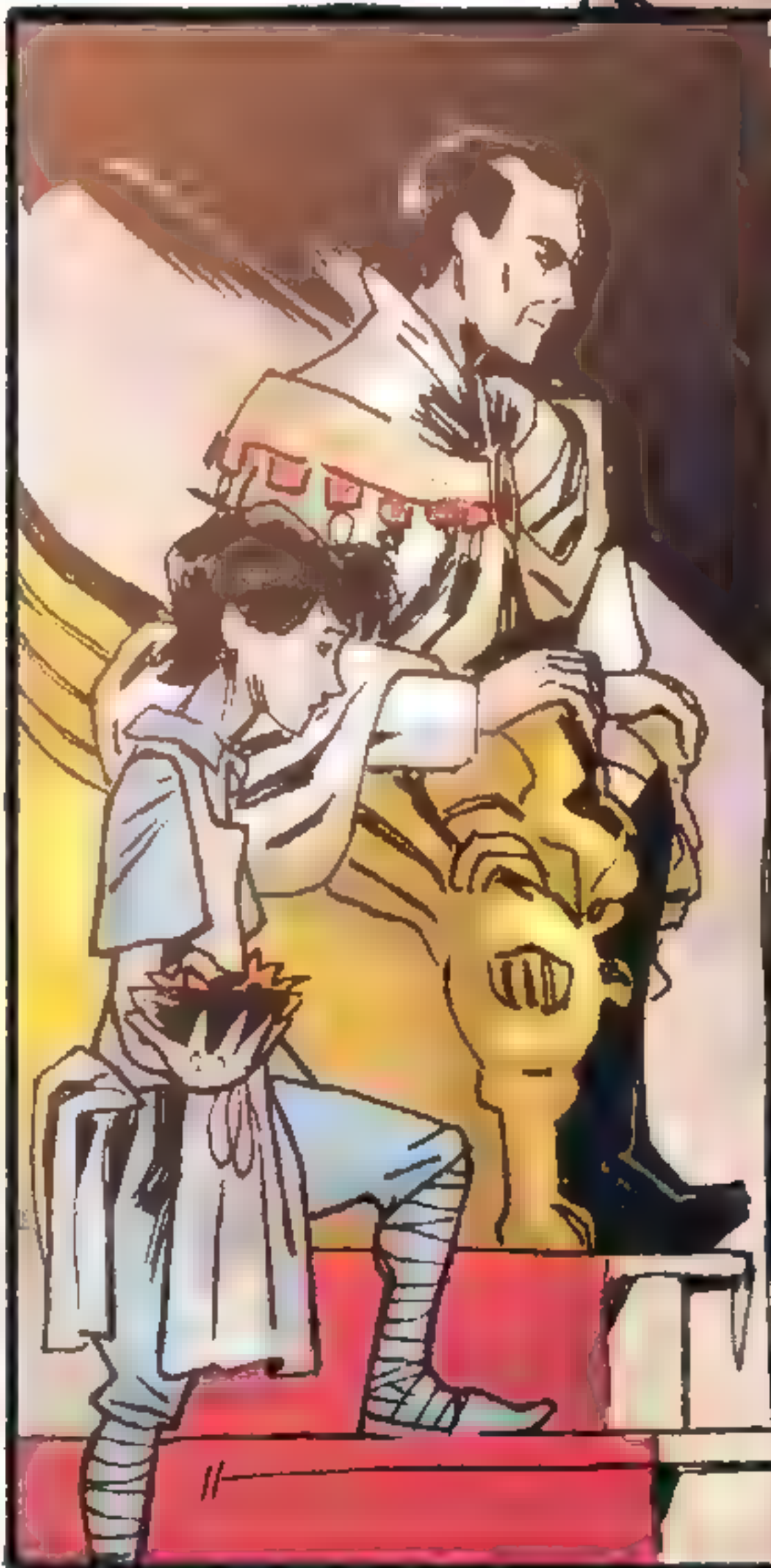


I CAPTURED THE REBEL LEADER ANZIO! AND, TOMO WOLFE, MY LORD, I SWEAR TO YOU I *WILL* RETRIEVE THE MASK! I JUST NEED MORE MEN... MORE TIME.

I AM WEARY OF YOUR EXCUSES, OLD FRIEND. I NEED THE MASK RETURNED *NOW*. IT IS *UNTIDY* TO HAVE IT LOOSE IN THE WORLD. THIS TASK MAY BE BEYOND YOUR CAPABILITIES...



PERHAPS DON BARRABAS WILL SUCCEED WHERE *YOU* HAVE FAILED.



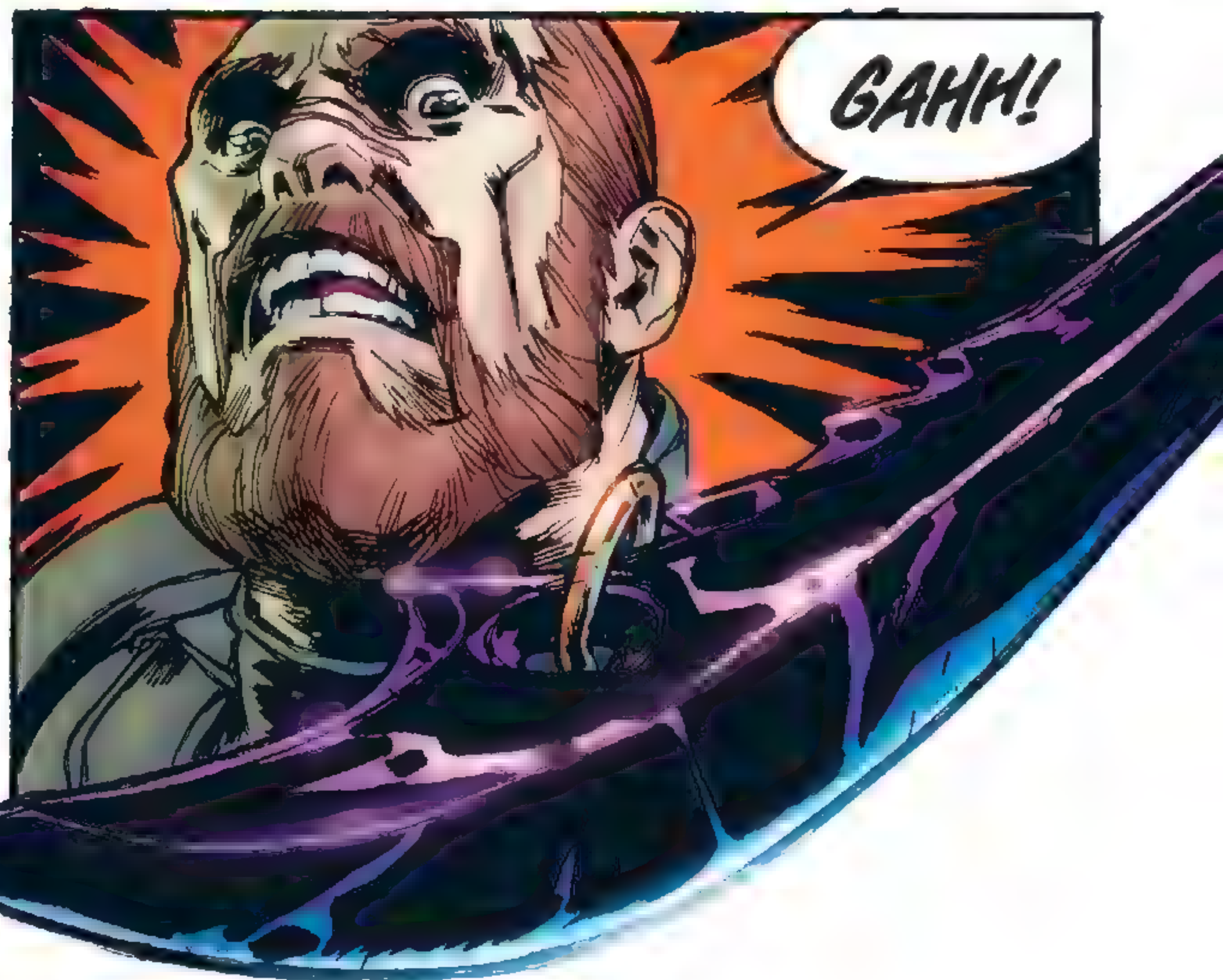
DON BARRABAS?! MY LORD, YOU CANNOT BE SERIOUS! THAT MUTE *FREAK?*! DO NOT GIVE SUCH AN IMPORTANT TASK TO THAT...TO THAT...



BARRABAS IS AS *INSANE* AS HE IS DIM-WITTED, MY LORD! HE IS *NOT* TO BE TRUSTED! AND WE ALL KNOW HE IS...

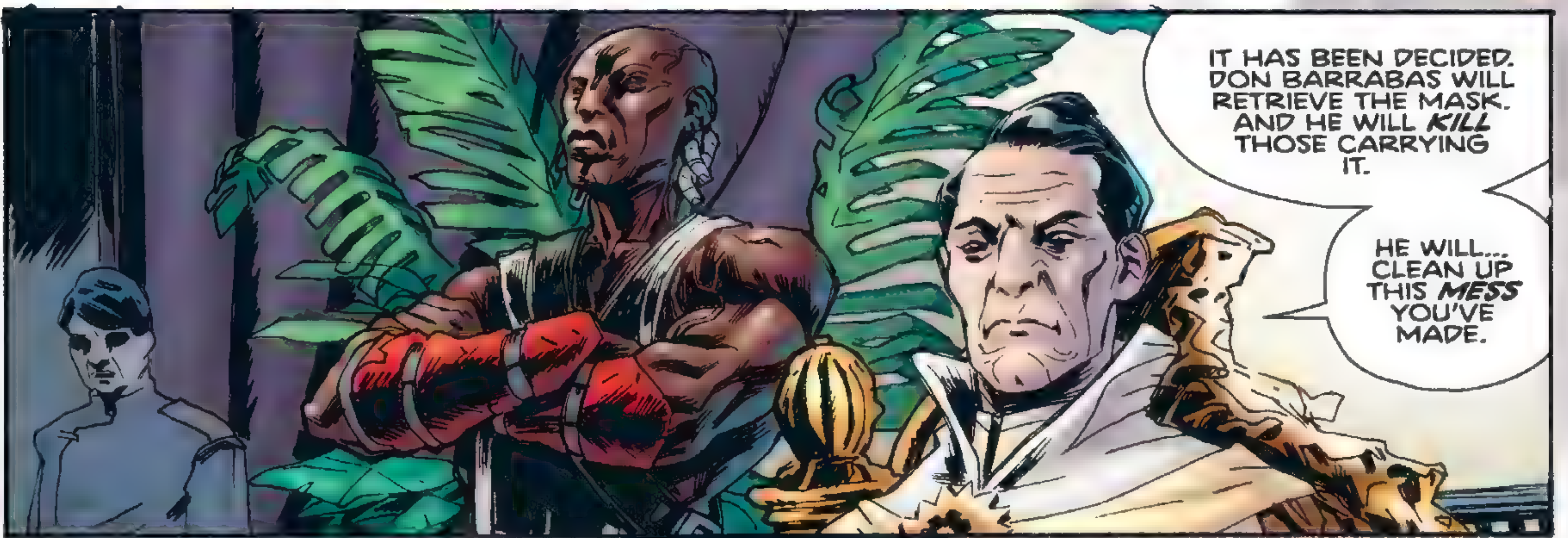
...UNNATURAL.

BZZZZZZ

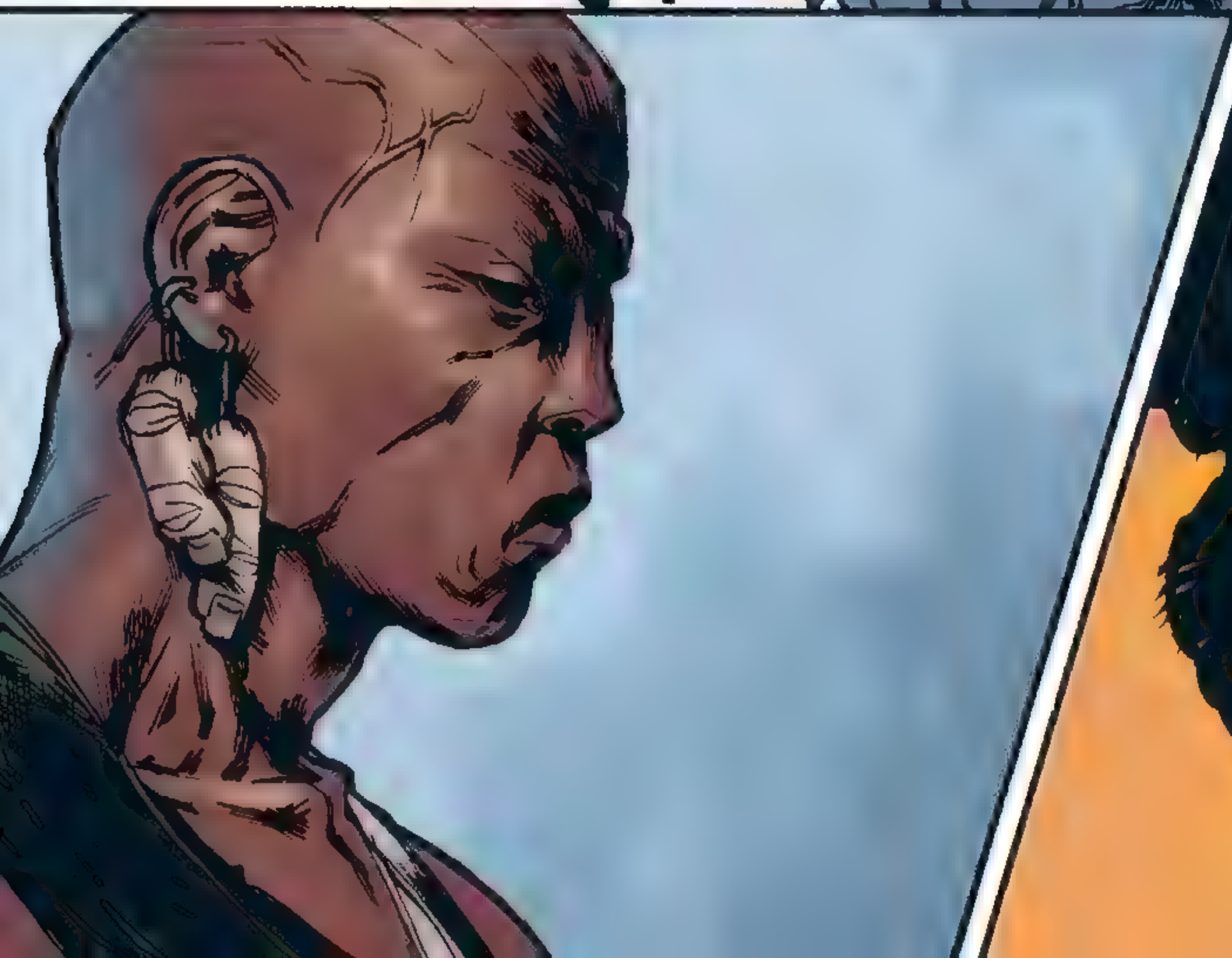


GAHH!





MEANWHILE,
GET AS MUCH
INFORMATION AS YOU
CAN FROM THAT
"SHADOW REBEL"
VERMIN.





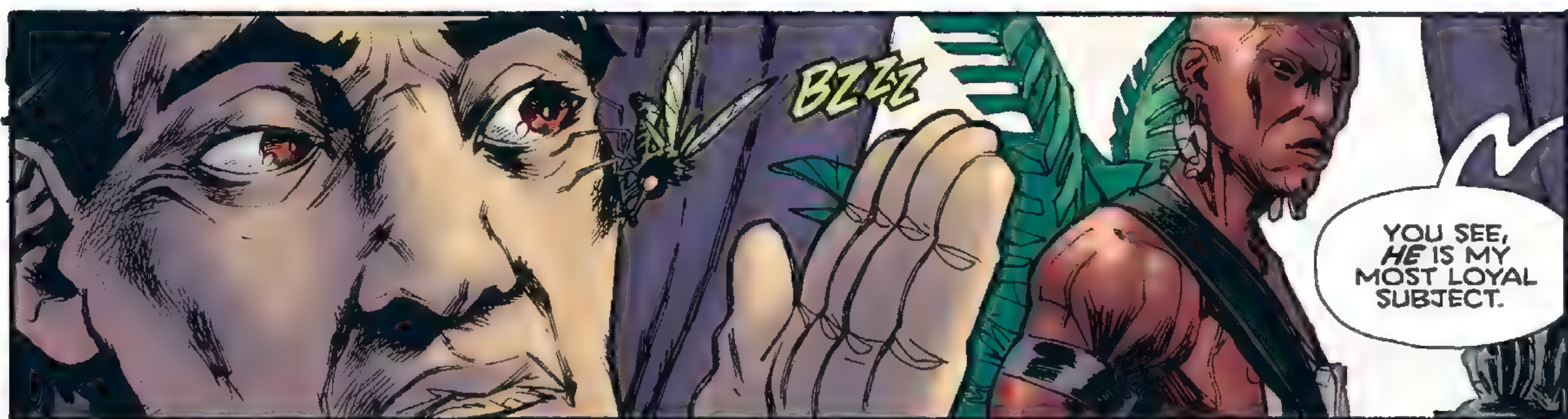
I WILL TRY TO PERSUADE DON BARRABAS TO FORGIVE YOU FOR YOUR LAPSE OF JUDGEMENT CONCERNING "THE FLY INCIDENT."

MY RESPECT FOR YOUR ESTEEMED COMRADE, DON BARRABAS, IS COMPLETE. HE DOES *VERY* IMPORTANT WORK FOR ME. AND HIS ABILITIES ARE... SINGULAR.

IN RETURN, I KEEP THIS SOLEMN VOW: *NO CREATURE, LARGE OR SMALL, WILL EVER BE HARMED IN FORTRESS PENUEL.* UNDERSTAND?



IN YOUR EMBARRASSMENT OVER YOUR FAILURE TO RETRIEVE THE MASK YOU MUST HAVE FORGOTTEN THIS *STRICT* CODE. BE GRATEFUL THAT I WILL OVERLOOK YOUR TRANSGRESSION... THIS TIME.



YOU SEE, *HE* IS MY MOST LOYAL SUBJECT.



AND IF YOU KNEW WHAT I KNOW OF DON BARRABAS, YOU WOULD NEVER DOUBT HIS LOYALTY.

"IT IS SAID
BARRABAS
WAS BORN
IN ONE
OF THE
VILLAGES,
NEAR THE
EDGE OF
THE WILD."

PUSH!
PUSH!

OHHH!!

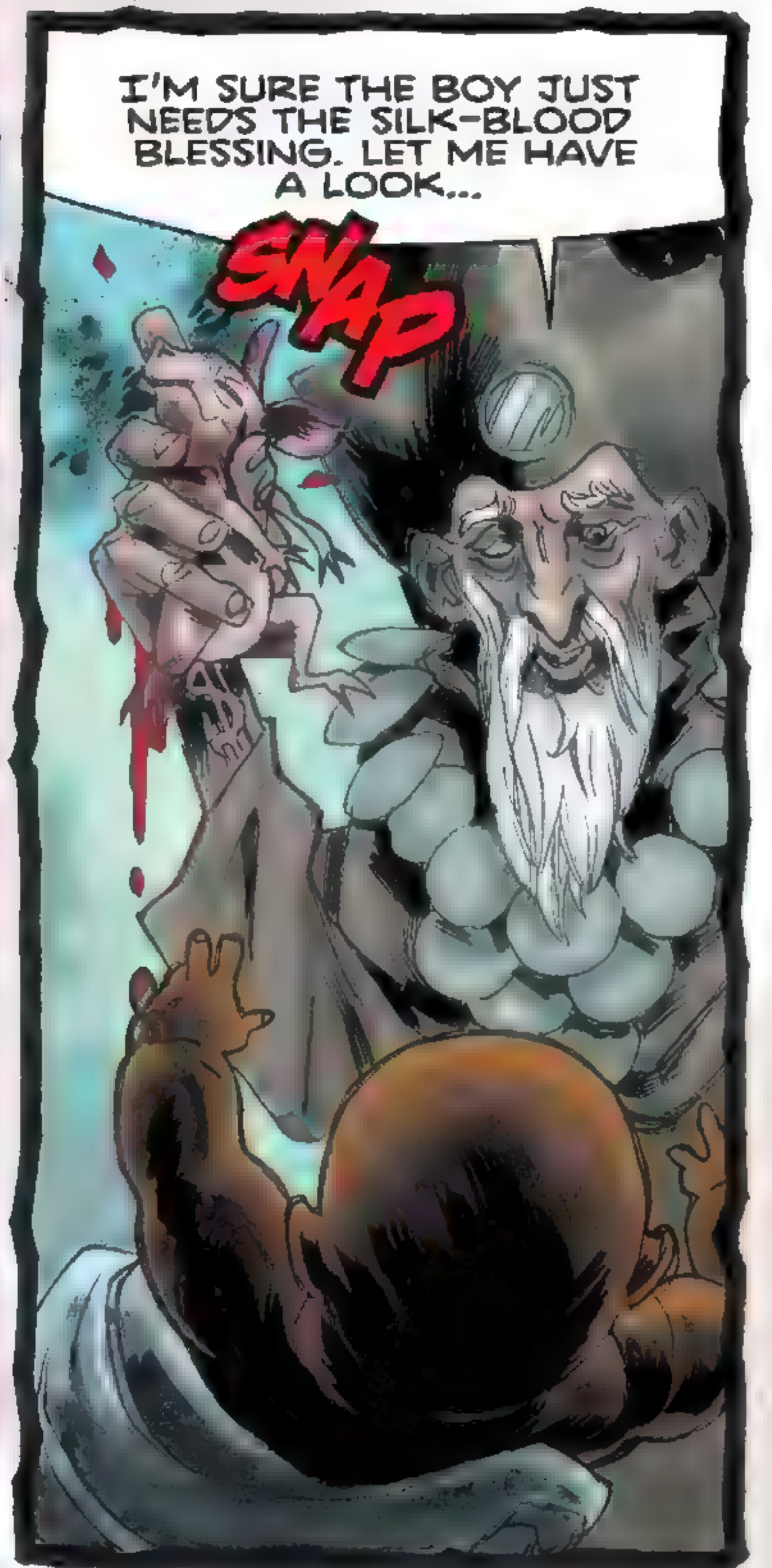
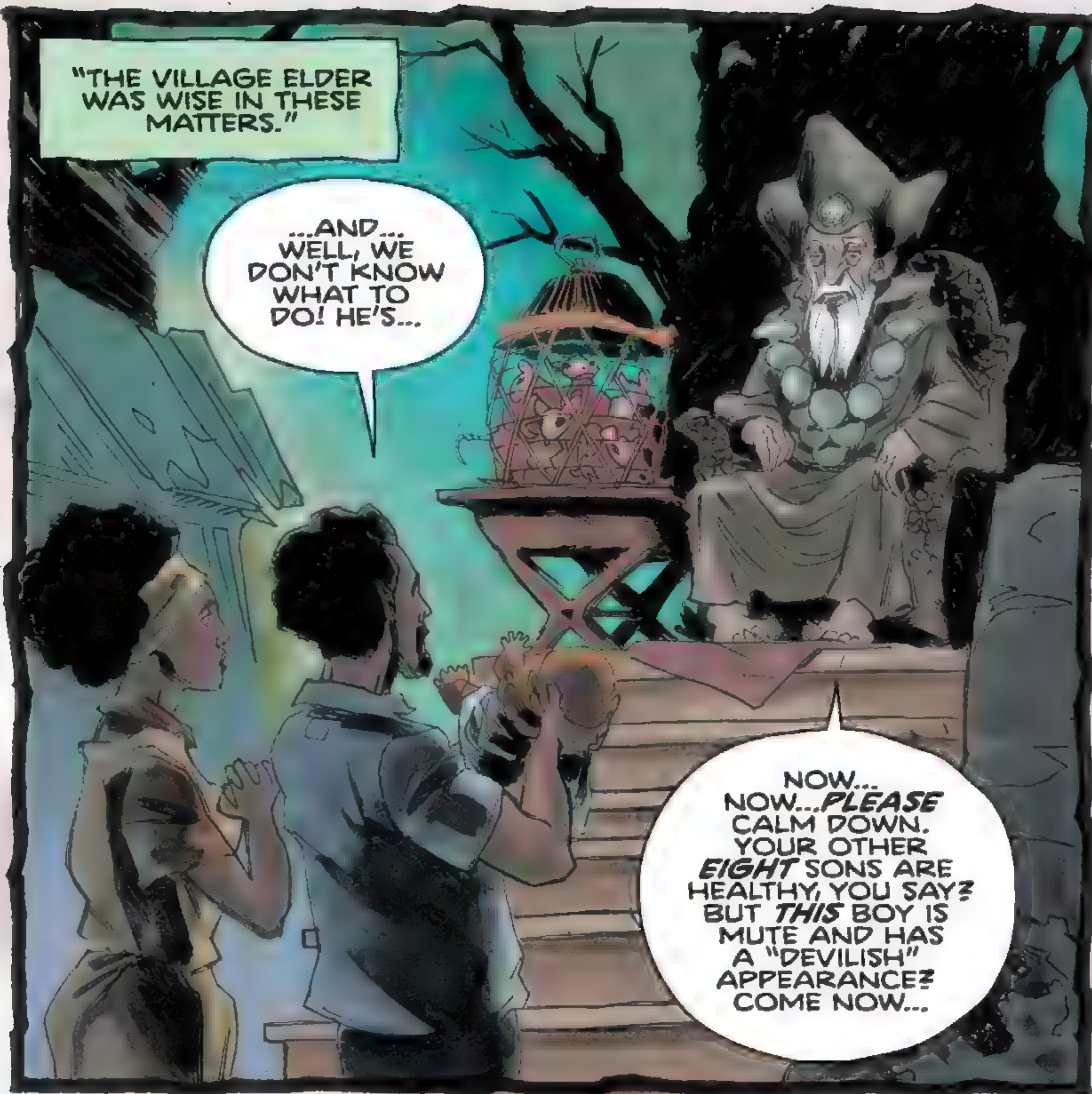
OH!!
OH!!

THAT'S IT!
HERE...HE...
COMES...

"HE WAS THE YOUNGEST OF NINE BROTHERS,
BUT EVEN FROM BIRTH HE WAS...DIFFERENT."

Oh
DEAR GOD!
THAT *CAN'T BE!*
WHAT...WHAT'S
WRONG WITH
MY BABY?!

WHAT...
IS *THAT?*!

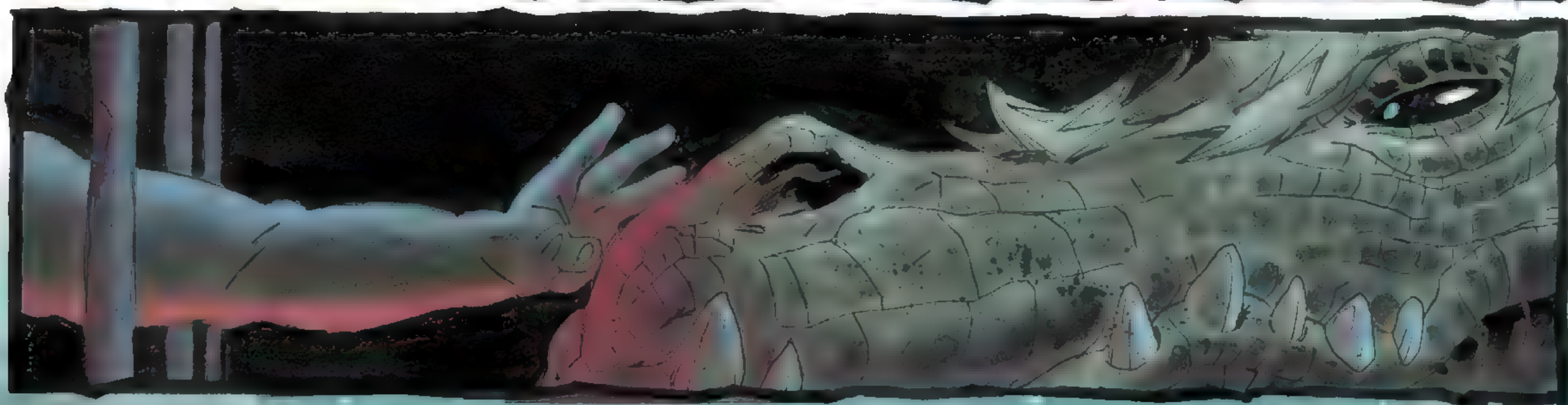
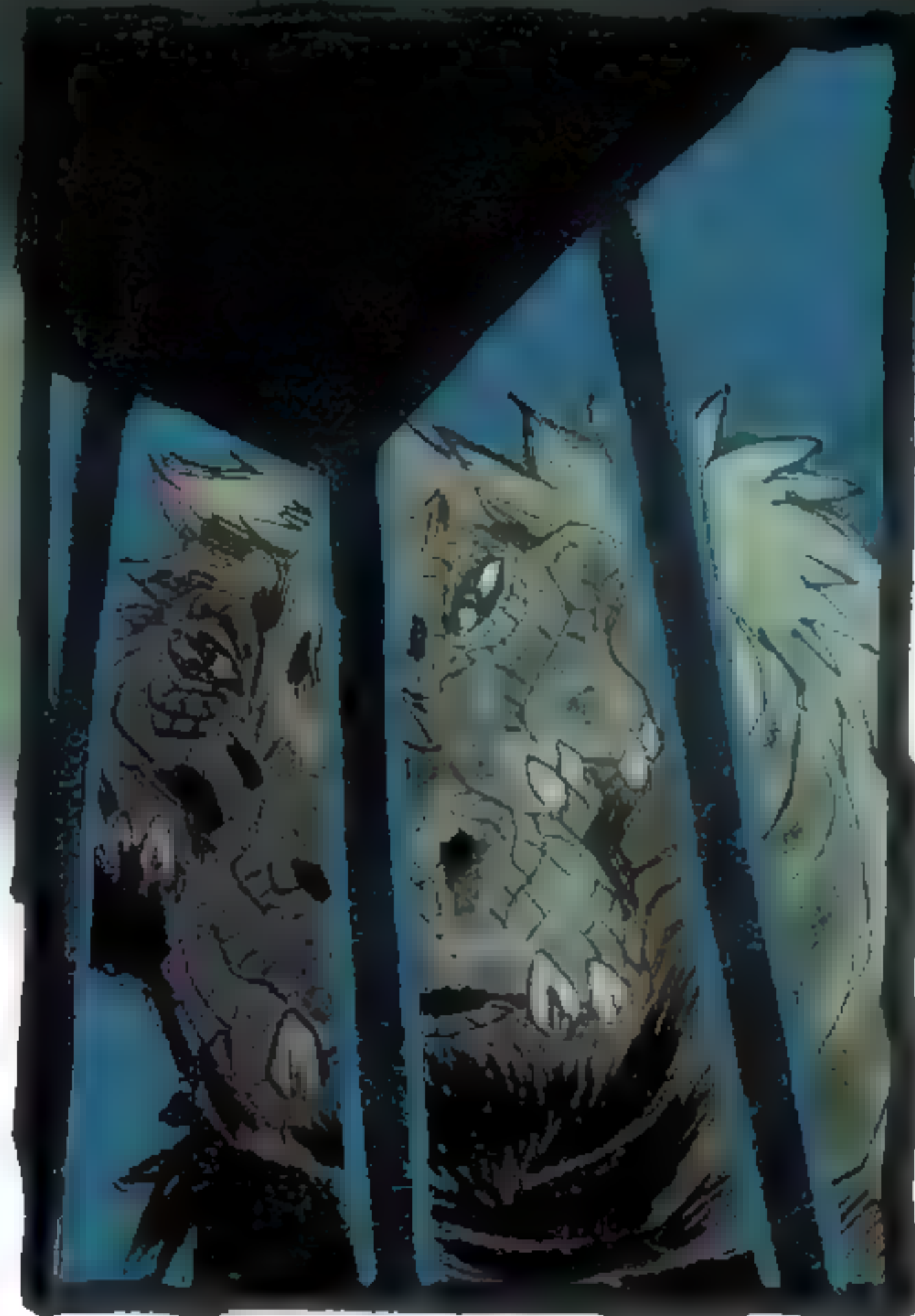
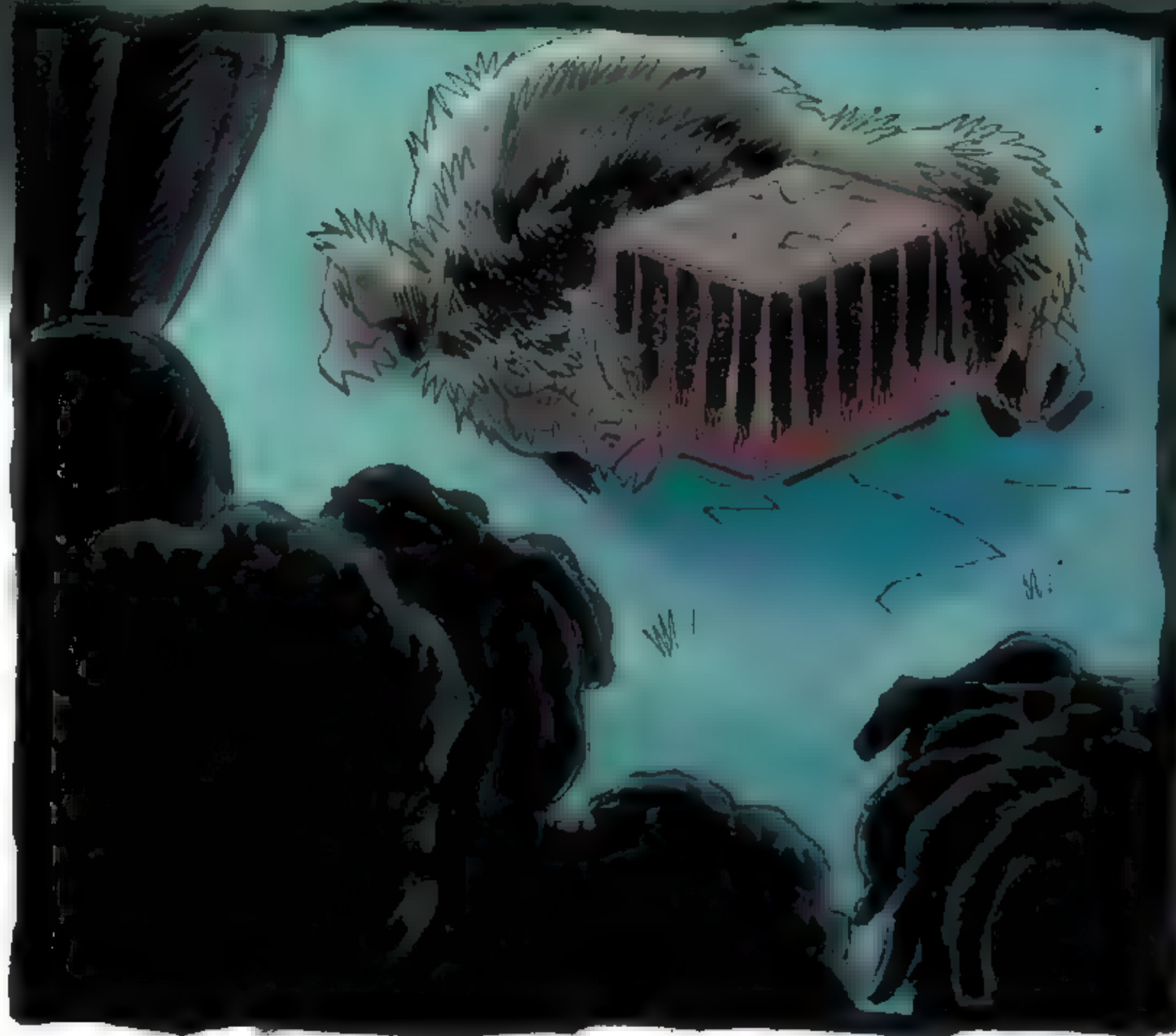


"BARRABAS'S
FAMILY DID
WHAT THEY
THOUGHT
WAS BEST."

THERE ARE
FRESH TRACKS
RIGHT ALONG HERE.
BIG ONES. IT'S NOT
CRUEL. IT'S THE ONLY
WAY. NOW NATURE
WILL...TAKE ITS
COURSE.



IT
WON'T
BE LONG
NOW.



"BY NIGHT, THE ANIMALS OF THE WILD
BROUGHT HIM SUSTENANCE, BUT BY
DAY, BARRABAS'S LIFE WAS ONE SMALL
TORTURE AFTER ANOTHER."

HOW
DO YOU
LIKE *THAT*,
YOU MUTE
FREAK?!

Haha!
HE NEVER
EVEN
SCREAMS.
THROW IT
HARDER!



"AND EACH
YEAR BROUGHT
NEW TORMENT
FROM HIS
BROTHERS."

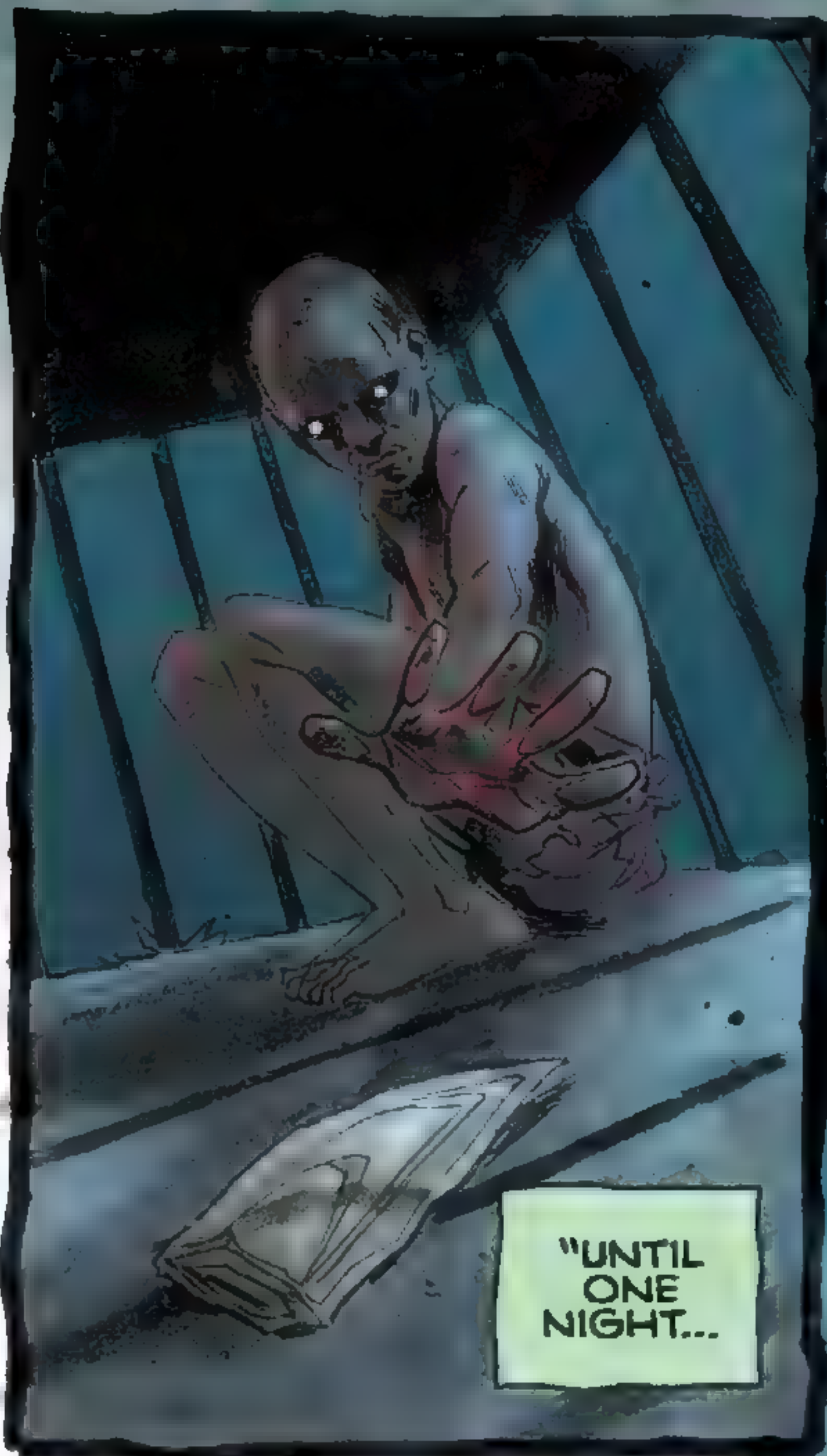


HA
HA
HA!

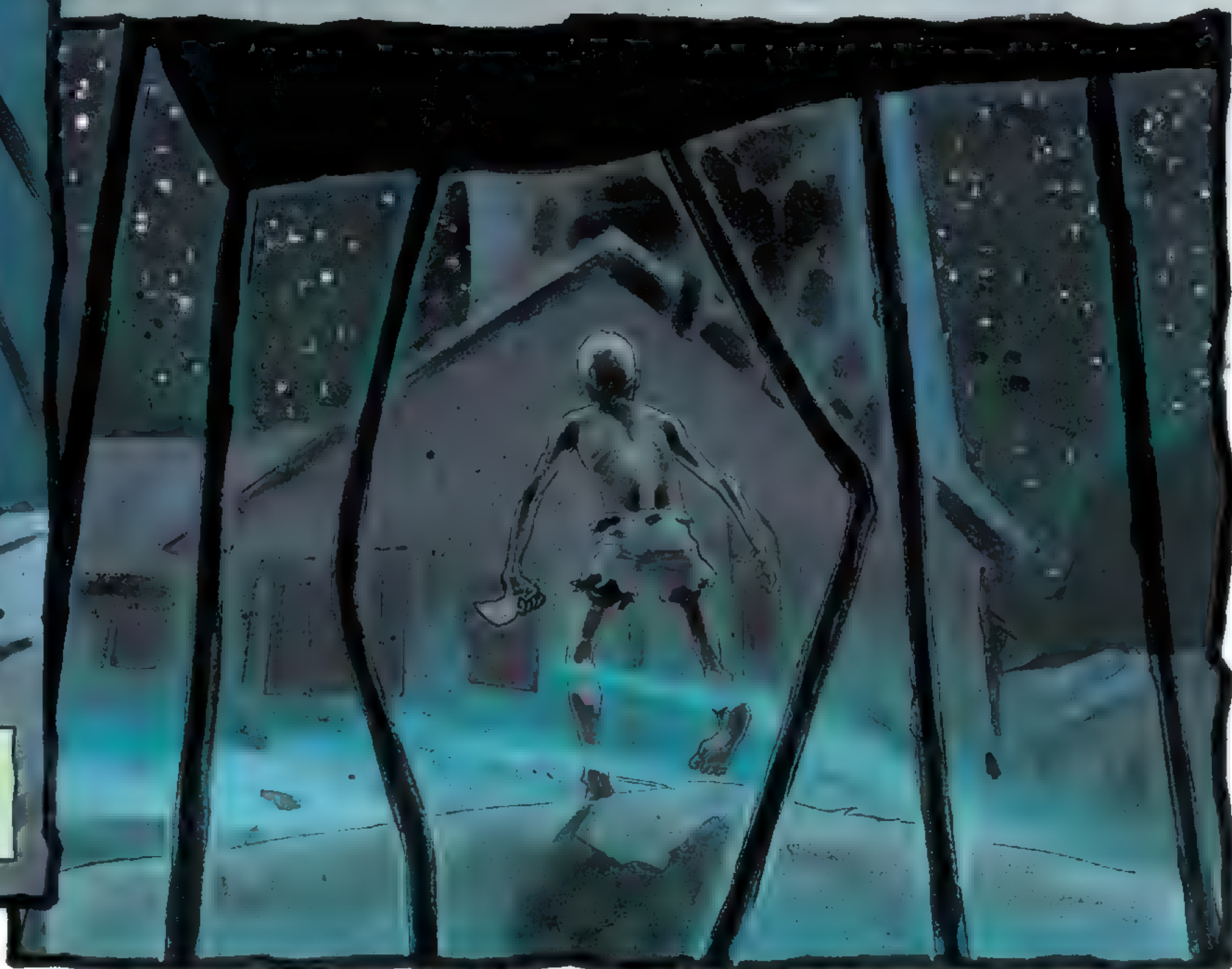
HA
HA!

HA!

HA!

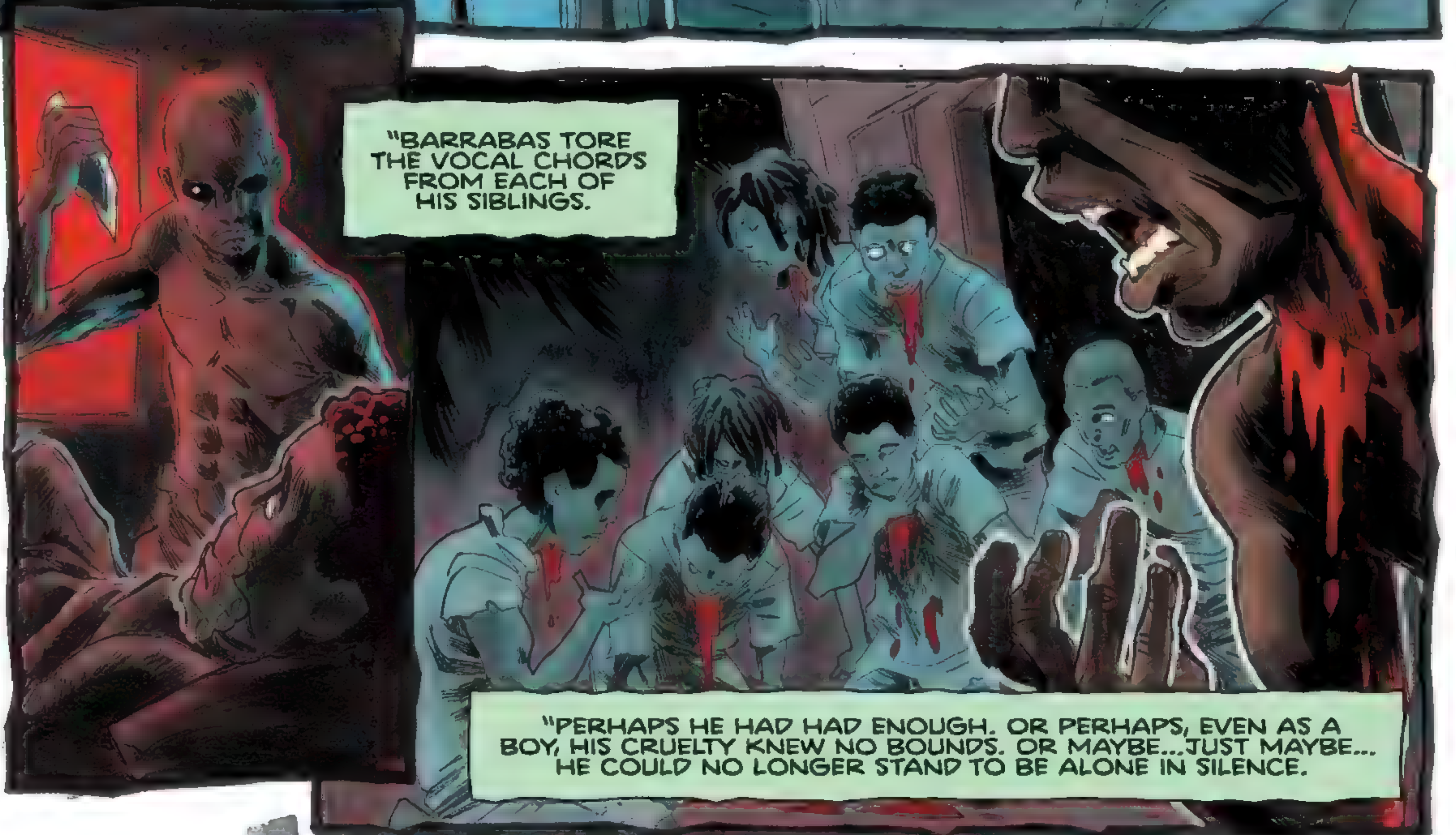


"UNTIL
ONE
NIGHT..."





"BARRABAS TORE
THE VOCAL CHORDS
FROM EACH OF
HIS SIBLINGS."



"PERHAPS HE HAD HAD ENOUGH. OR PERHAPS, EVEN AS A
BOY, HIS CRUELTY KNEW NO BOUNDS. OR MAYBE...JUST MAYBE...
HE COULD NO LONGER STAND TO BE ALONE IN SILENCE."

"HE WAS
JUDGED
ACCURSED,
A DEMON."



MONSTER!!

**GET
OUT!!**



"MYSTERIOUSLY, HIS
FORMER TORMENTORS,
THEIR WOUNDS STILL
RAW, FOLLOWED AFTER
HIM INTO THE WILD
TO SERVE AS HIS
DEADLY HENCHMEN."

"I WAS INTRIGUED BY RUMORS THAT SOMEWHERE OUT THERE WAS A MAN WHO HAD A CONNECTION TO THE MUTATED MONSTERS THAT POPULATE THE WILD, A LORD OF THESE BEASTS.

"I SEARCHED FOR YEARS, LOSING MANY MEN, AND I HAD BEGUN TO THINK HE WAS A LEGEND CONCOCTED TO SCARE BRIDGE RAT CHILDREN.

"AND THEN I FOUND HIM. *DEEP* IN THE WILD.

"HE WAS REAL. AND HE WAS BRANDISHING SCIMITARS FORGED FROM RAZOR-BEETLE PINNERS, SHARP ENOUGH TO CUT THROUGH TITANIUM MAGNATE. HIS EYES WERE DEAD, JOYFUL, AND UTTERLY CRAZY. I HAVE NOT OFTEN BEEN... THIS IMPRESSED. PERHAPS THE OTHER RUMORS WERE TRUE AS WELL."

HOW GOOD IT IS THAT YOU REALLY EXIST.



PUT DOWN YOUR GUNS.

BARRABAS! I SENSE THAT YOU MIGHT BE VERY... WHAT'S THE RIGHT WORD? *HUNGRY*. YES, THAT'S IT. *HUNGRY*. BUT EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT NOW.





HOW DOES IT
FEEL WHEN
HUMANS HURT
ONE OF YOUR
ANIMALS?

HOW DID IT
FEEL WHEN
THEY HURT
YOU? WHEN
THEY
TAUNTED
YOU?



YOU'D LIKE TO GET
EVEN WITH THE PEOPLE
WHO MOCKED YOU,
WHO *TORTURED* YOU,
WHO *DROVE YOU*
OUT...

WOULDN'T
YOU?

NOT JUST
THOSE PEOPLE,
BUT *EVERYONE* WHO
WOULD DO A THING
LIKE THAT...



TO THAT
TYPE OF PERSON,
A MAN LIKE YOU
IS NOTHING BUT
FILTH. TO THEM,
YOU'RE AN
ABOMINATION.



AAK!

BUT *I*
UNDERSTAND.



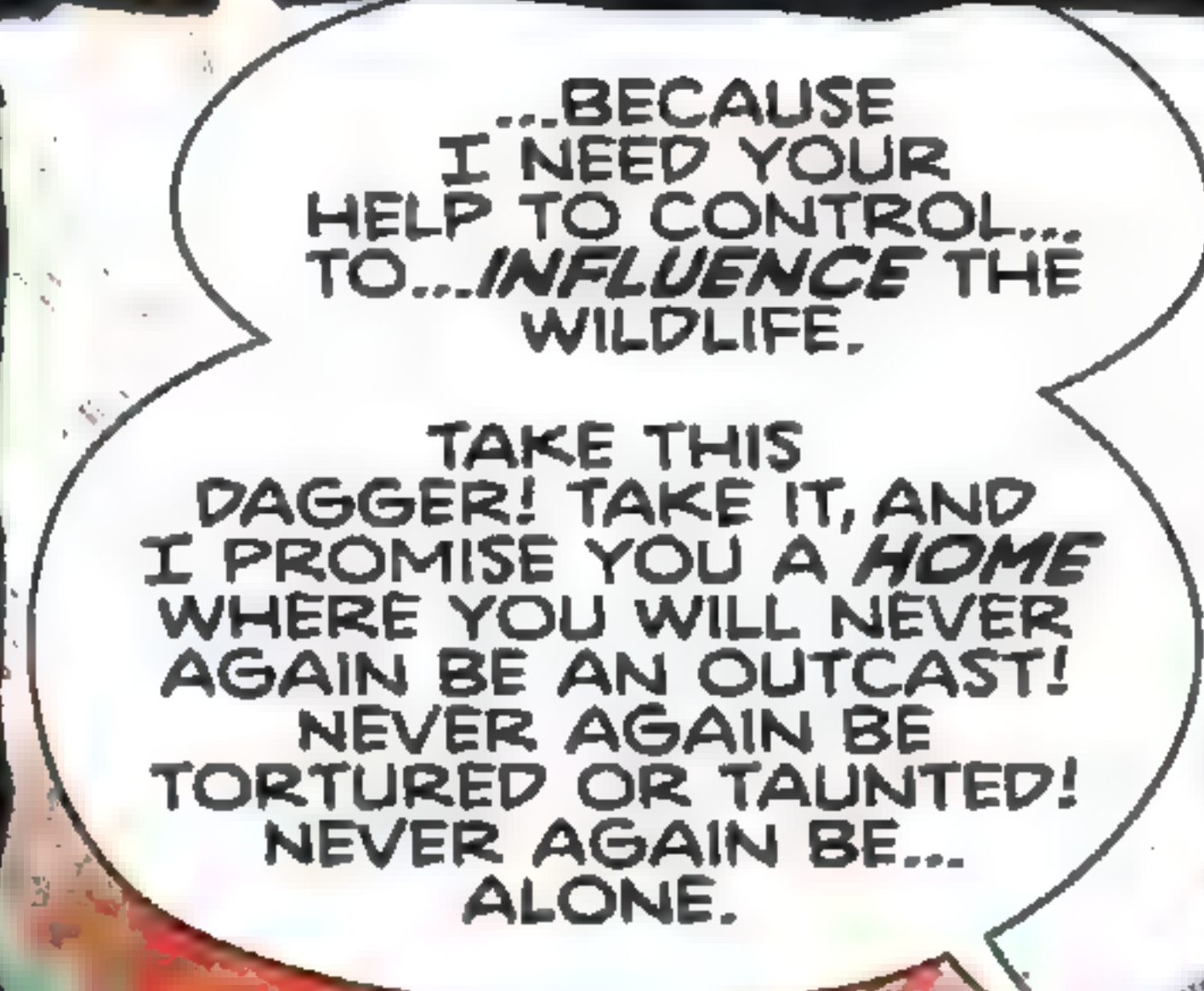
GAH!

MY
CONTEMPT
FOR HUMANS
IS EQUAL TO
YOUR OWN.



WE HAVE
SIMILAR NOTIONS
OF THESE PEOPLE'S
WORTH. HERE!
THESE GUNS ARE
A GIFT...

FUMP



...BECAUSE
I NEED YOUR
HELP TO CONTROL...
TO...*INFLUENCE* THE
WILDLIFE.

TAKE THIS
DAGGER! TAKE IT, AND
I PROMISE YOU A *HOME*
WHERE YOU WILL NEVER
AGAIN BE AN OUTCAST!
NEVER AGAIN BE
TORTURED OR TAUNTED!
NEVER AGAIN BE...
ALONE.



I WILL PROTECT *ALL*
YOUR BELOVED CREATURES
WITH EVERY OUNCE OF MY
POWER AND *YOU* WILL
BE MY RIGHT HAND MAN,
A LIEUTENANT, HIGH IN MY
COUNSELS. *DON BARRABAS*,
I SUSPECT, FOR THE FIRST
TIME IN YOUR LIFE, YOU
HAVE BEEN *CHOSEN.*

I'M GOING
TO SET YOU ON
THOSE WHO MADE
YOU SUFFER.



I DON'T
KNOW EXACTLY
WHAT YOU ARE,
BUT I HAVE A FEELING
YOU WILL BE VERY, VERY
LOYAL. HUNGRY FOR A
HOME. HUNGRY FOR
REVENGE. HUNGRY
FOR...A FRIEND.

COME!
THERE'S
MUCH TO
DO...



WE...WE
SHOULD BE
ON OUR
WAY.

PRESENT DAY

"WE HAVE MADE
A PACT. DON
BARRABAS COMBS
THE WILDERNESS
FOR BEASTS TO
TAME AND TRAIN
FOR MY PURPOSES.
THE CREATURES DO
HIS BIDDING, AND
HE CARES FOR
THOSE IN HIS
CHARGE LIKE A
PROTECTIVE
MOTHER. IN
RETURN, I KEEP
THE SOLEMN VOW
THAT NO ANIMAL
WILL EVER BE
HARMED IN
FORTRESS PENUEL.



"...TRUST ME,
BARRABAS
WILL FIND
THOSE WITH
THE MASK..."

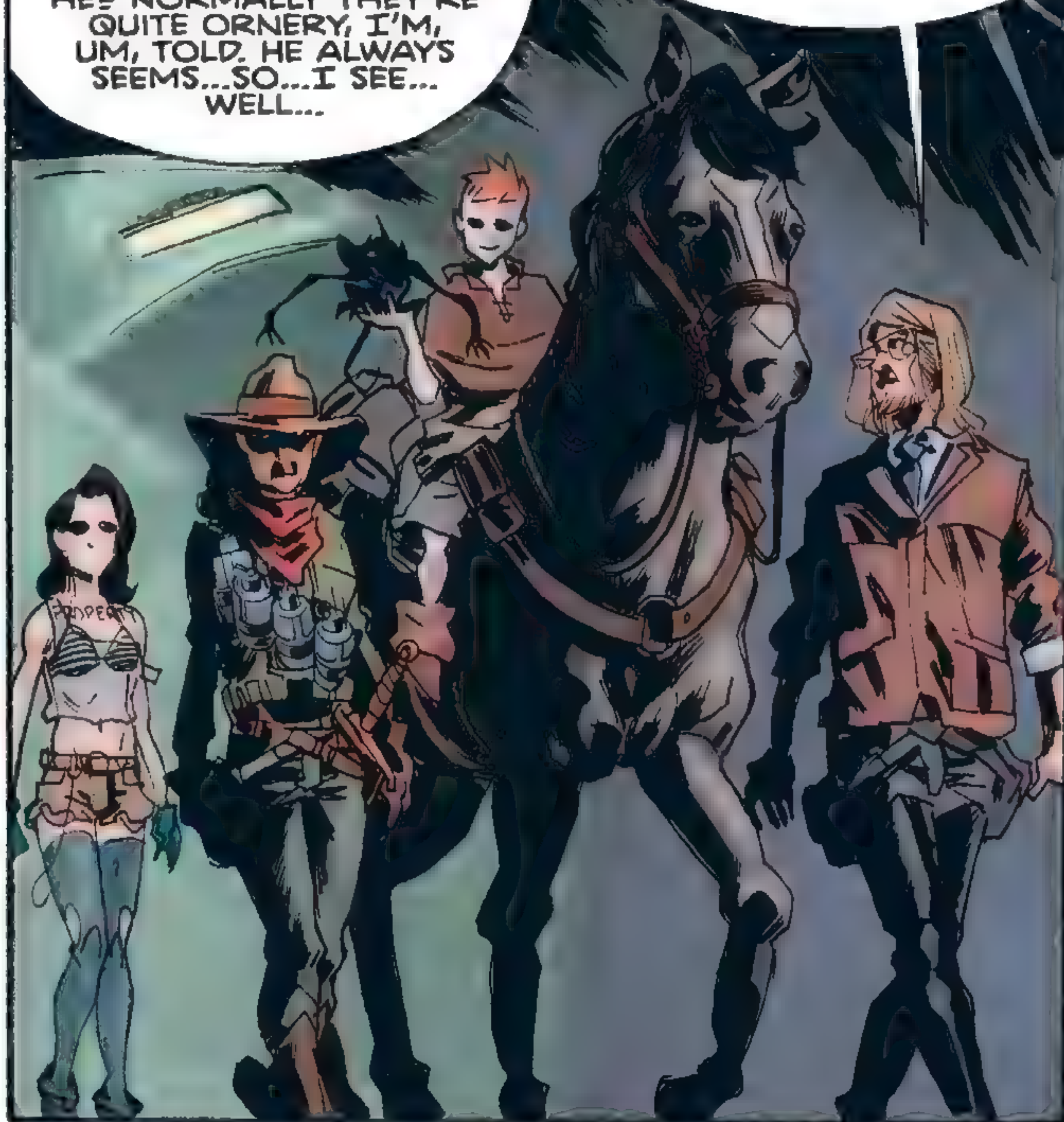
SIMON, OPAL HAS ASKED YOU *THREE* TIMES, AND THREE TIMES YOU AVOIDED THE QUESTION. WHAT EXACTLY *IS* THE PLAN TO RESCUE THIS ANZIO PERSON?

UM, RIGHT. YES. WELL...YEHZU CERTAINLY SEEMS TO BE GETTING ALONG WITH THAT SLIMY BAT CREATURE, DOESN'T HEZ NORMALLY THEY'RE QUITE ORNERY, I'M, UM, TOLD. HE ALWAYS SEEMS...SO...I SEE... WELL...

AND, UM, YES. SAY...OPAL...YOU MENTIONED AN *INTERESTING PERSON* WE MIGHT LOOK UP IN GATH, NO? UM... PERHAPS YOU SHOULD TELL...

YES. AS I SAID BEFORE, THERE'S AN OLD COMRADE WHO MAY BE ABLE TO HELP US. MANY YEARS AGO HE WAS GENERAL CHINA'S EXPLOSIVES EXPERT. WESTIN WAS HIS NAME. A GOOD MAN. IF HE'S STILL ALIVE, HE'LL BE IN GATH.

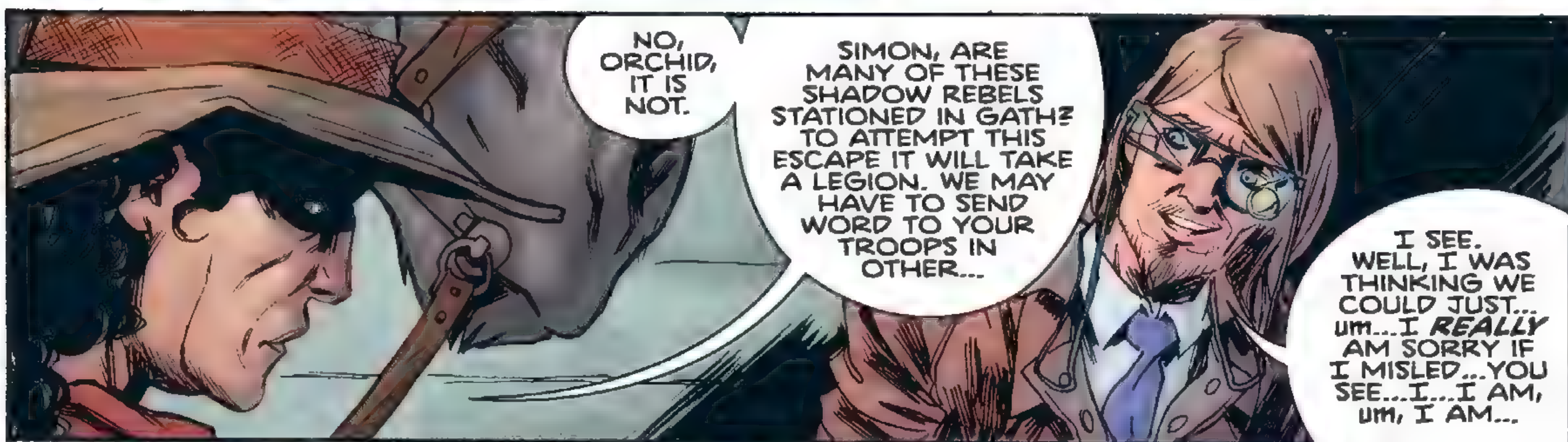
GATH? MY PIMP...HE TAKES HIS RICHES THERE. IT'S NOT SAFE...



NO, ORCHID, IT IS NOT.

SIMON, ARE MANY OF THESE SHADOW REBELS STATIONED IN GATH? TO ATTEMPT THIS ESCAPE IT WILL TAKE A LEGION. WE MAY HAVE TO SEND WORD TO YOUR TROOPS IN OTHER...

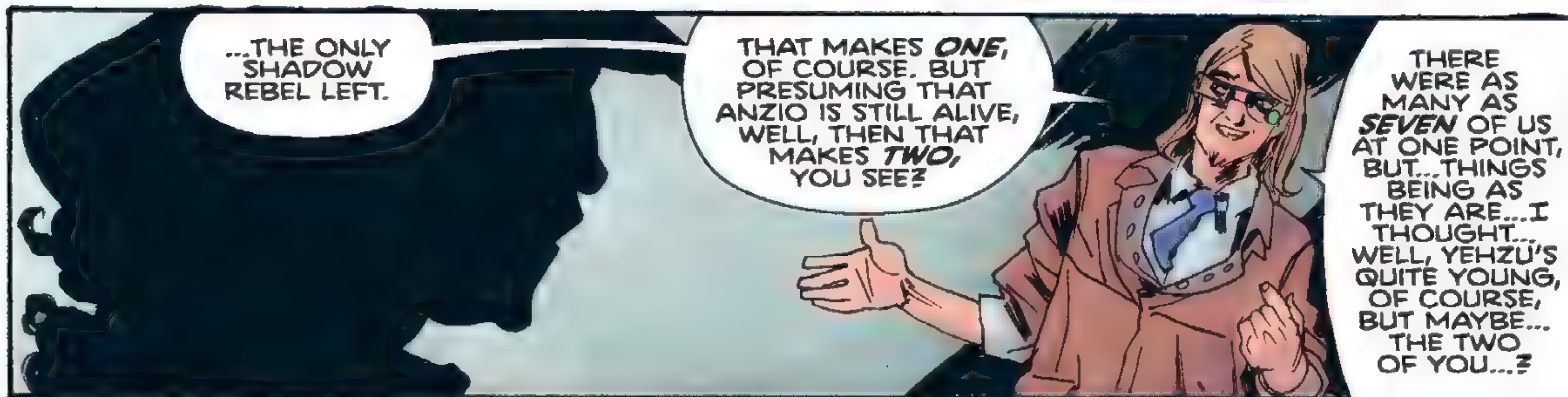
I SEE. WELL, I WAS THINKING WE COULD JUST... UM...I *REALLY* AM SORRY IF I MISLED...YOU SEE...I...I AM, UM, I AM...



...THE ONLY SHADOW REBEL LEFT.

THAT MAKES *ONE*, OF COURSE. BUT PRESUMING THAT ANZIO IS STILL ALIVE, WELL, THEN THAT MAKES *TWO*, YOU SEE?

THERE WERE AS MANY AS *SEVEN* OF US AT ONE POINT, BUT...THINGS BEING AS THEY ARE...I THOUGHT... WELL, YEHZU'S QUITE YOUNG, OF COURSE, BUT MAYBE... THE TWO OF YOU...?





WHAT? ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND? THIS WHOLE TIME YOU HAD US BELIEVING THAT YOU HAD SOME SORT OF BIG REBELLION GOING OR ARMY OR SOMETHING...BUT IT'S JUST YOU?!



JUST...YOUUU?!

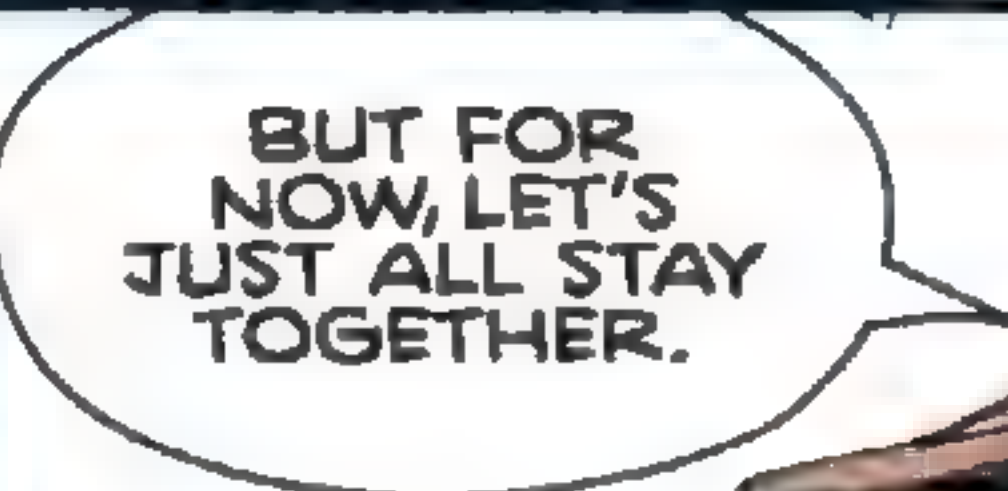
YOU'VE...YOU'VE RISKED OUR LIVES, AND YOU'RE THE ONLY...

CALM YOURSELF, ORCHID. IT'S ALL RIGHT. SIMON SEES THE WORLD THE WAY IT SHOULD BE, NOT THE WAY IT IS.

YES! VERY WELL PUT!



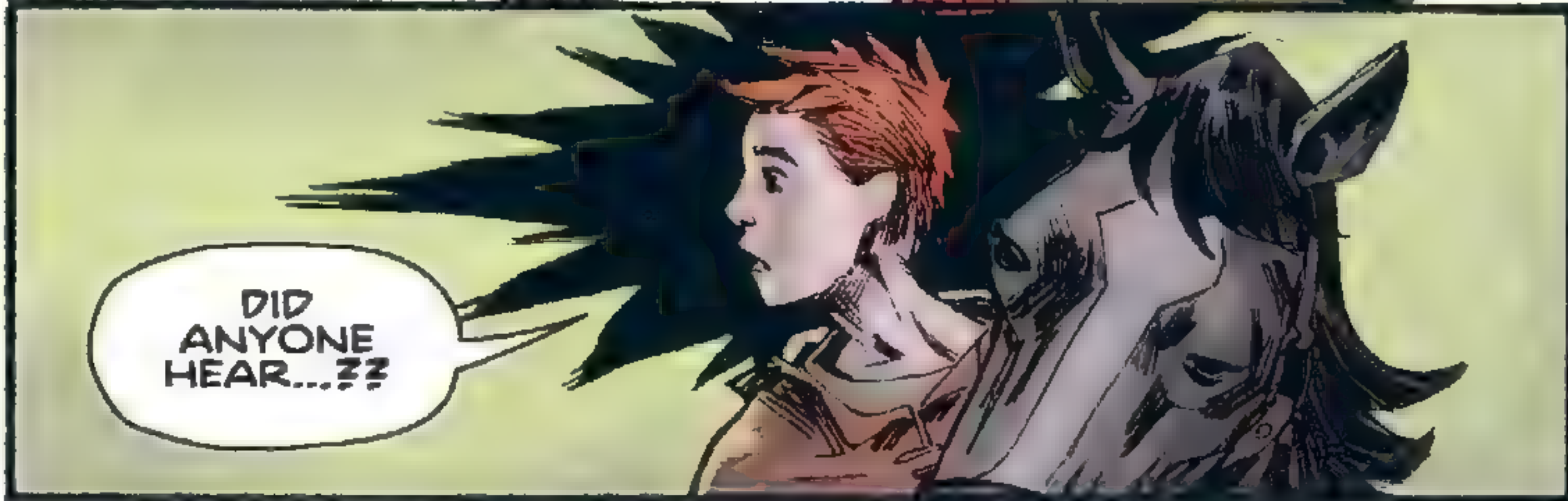
WHEN I MET YOU, I... I REMEMBERED, THAT THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT THE WORLD *WILL* BE, WHAT IT *CAN* BE. MAYBE THIS FIGHT FOR A DIFFERENT, BETTER WORLD WILL START...WHEN SOMEONE STARTS IT.



BUT FOR NOW, LET'S JUST ALL STAY TOGETHER.



FOR NOW...



DID ANYONE HEAR...??



ALL-RIGHTY THEN, NOW THAT *THAT'S* SETTLED, LET'S KEEP RIGHT ON GOING, EVERYONE! WE SHOULD PROBABLY BE NEARING...



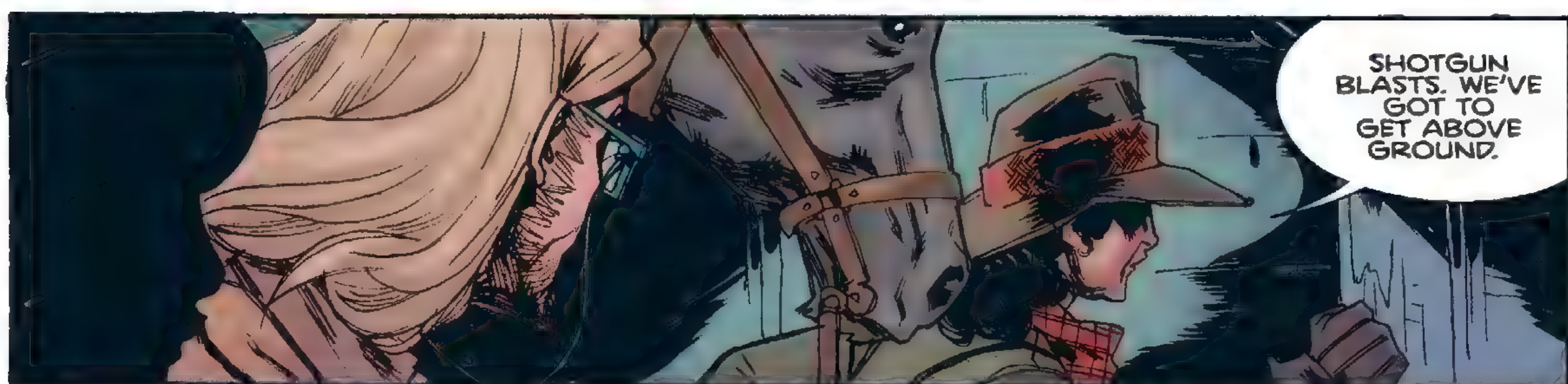
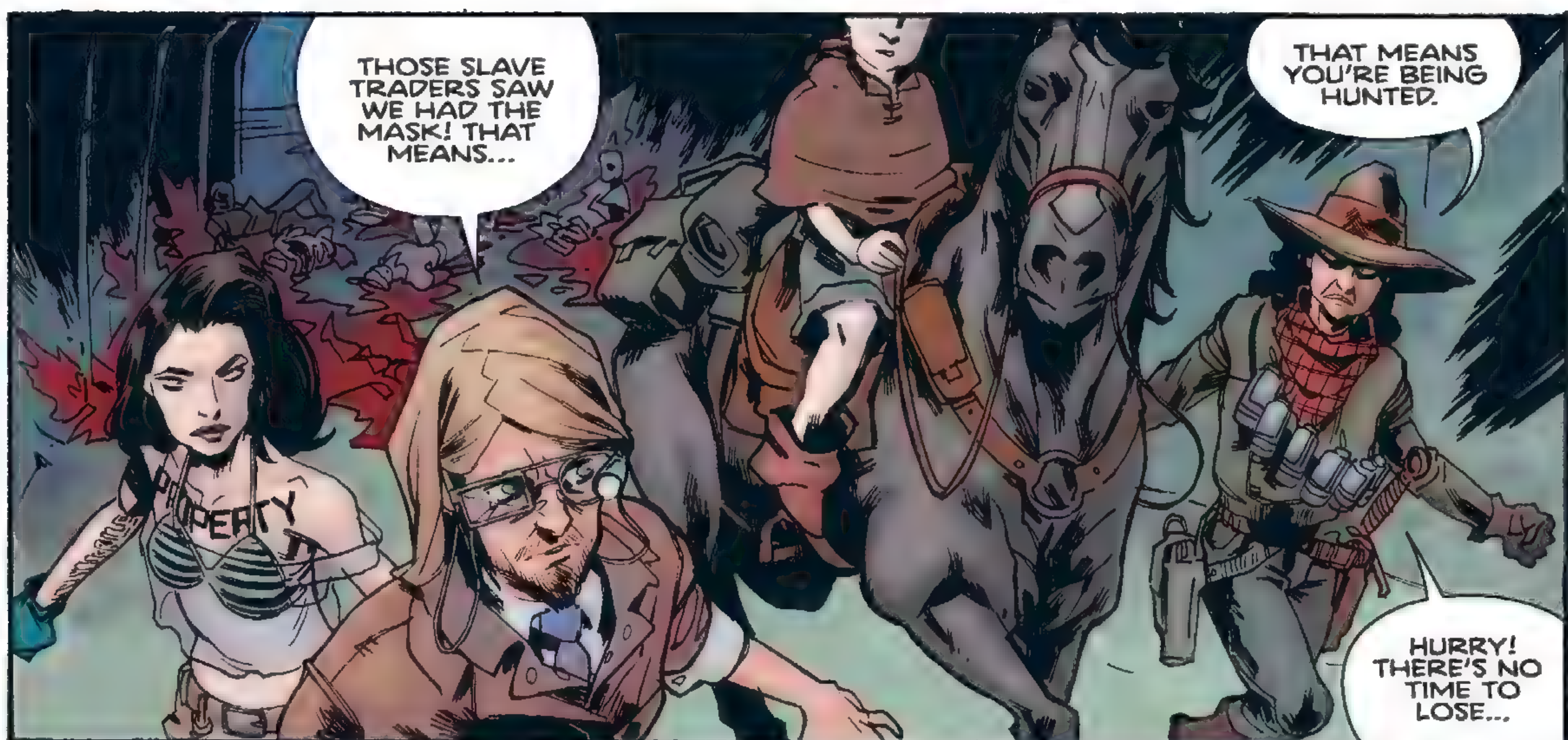
Oh
NO...

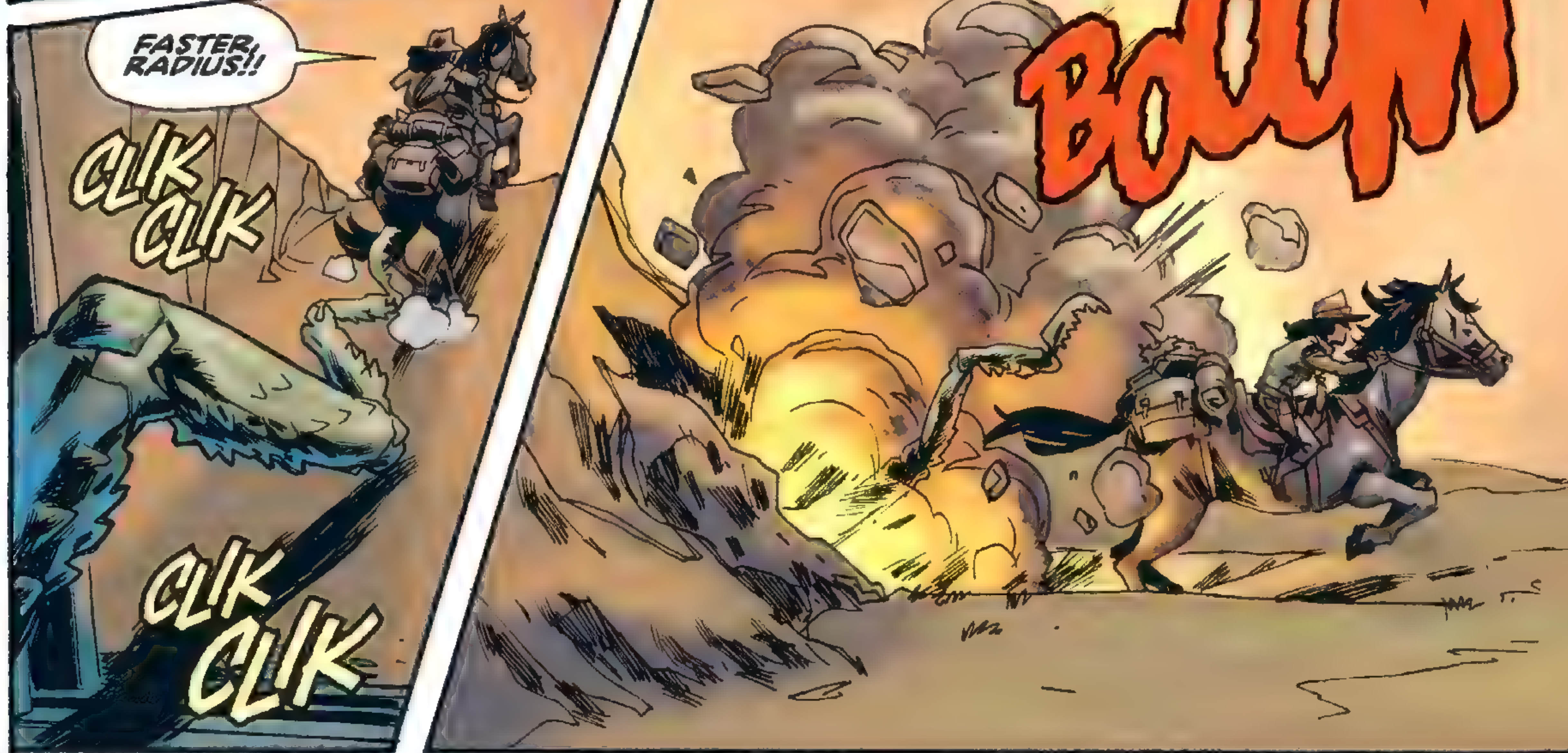
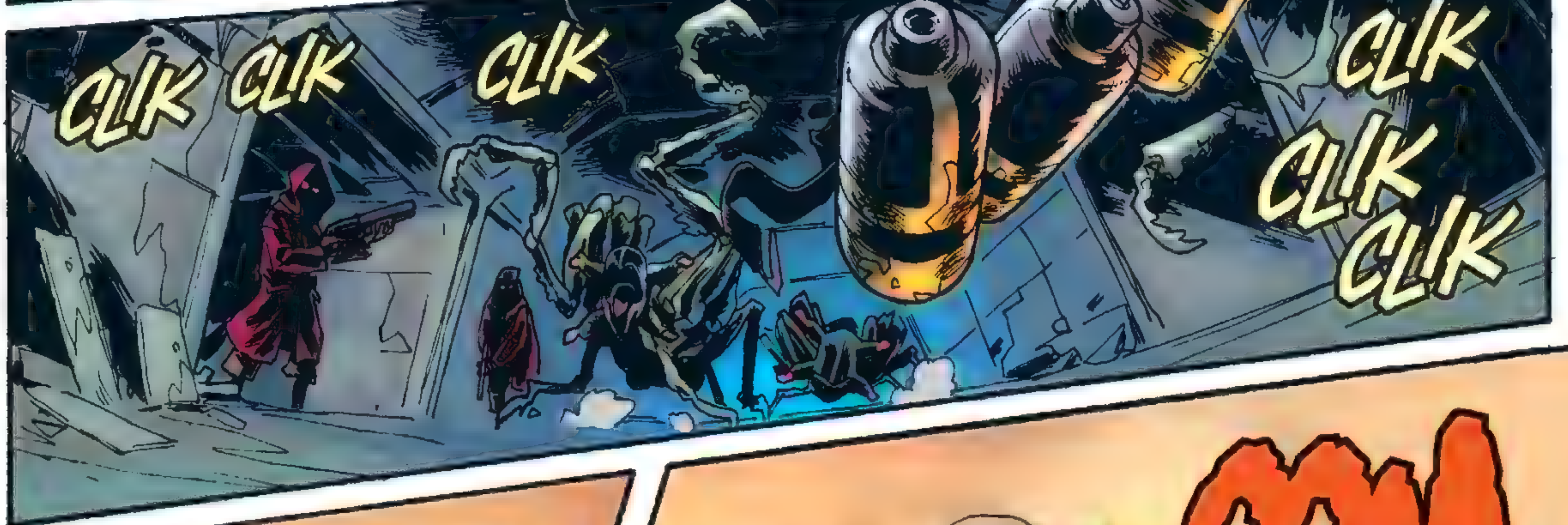
I...I
RECOGNIZE
THAT MAN! ARE
THESE...?

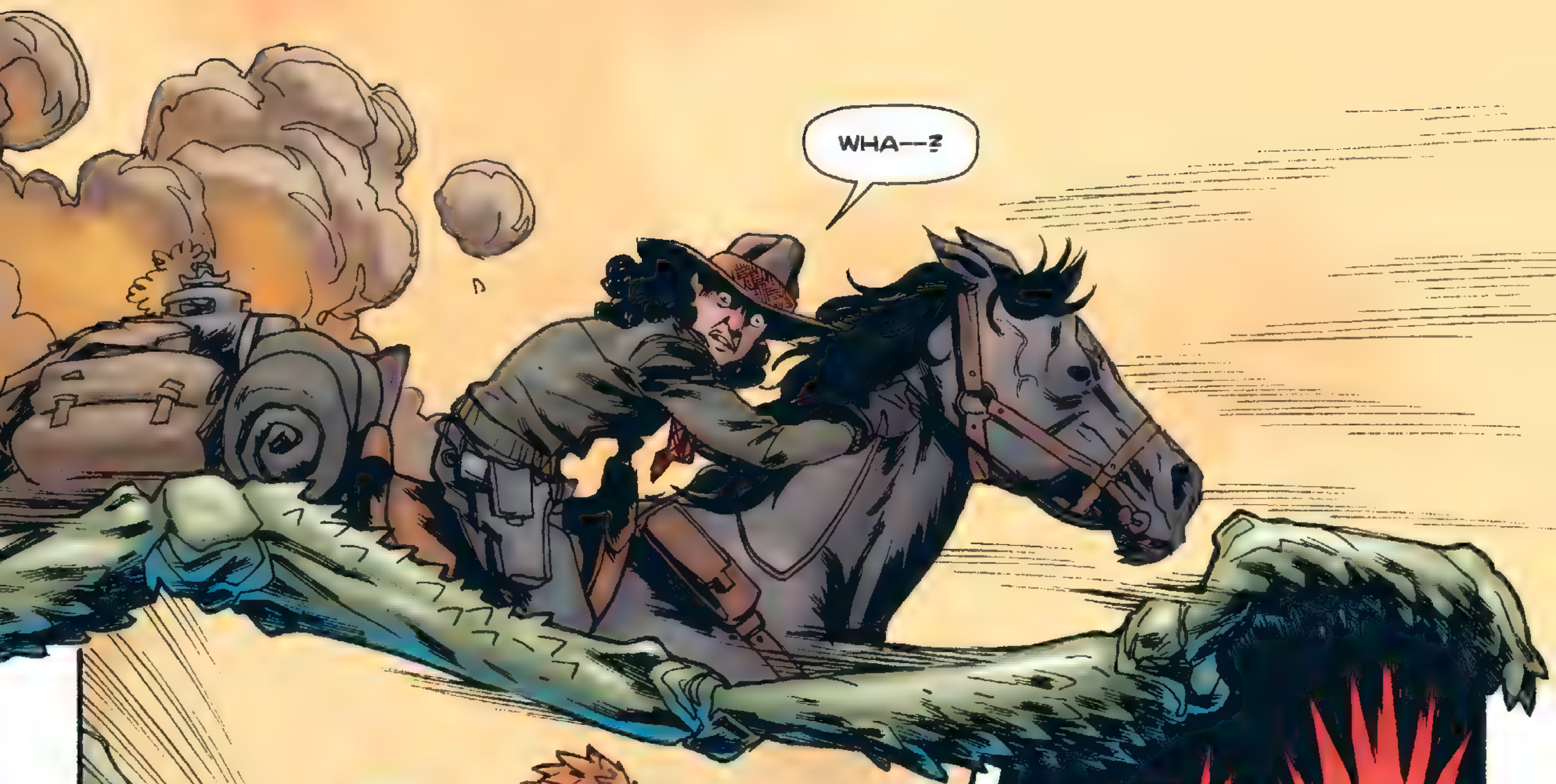
I'M
AFRAID
SO. THESE
ARE THE
SAME SLAVE
TRADERS
WE ESCAPED
FROM DAYS
AGO.

WHO'S
"BARRABAS"?

WHAT
DID YOU SAY,
YEHZU?







WHA--?



HEY!



YEHZU!!



ORCHID!!!
HELP
MEEE!!!

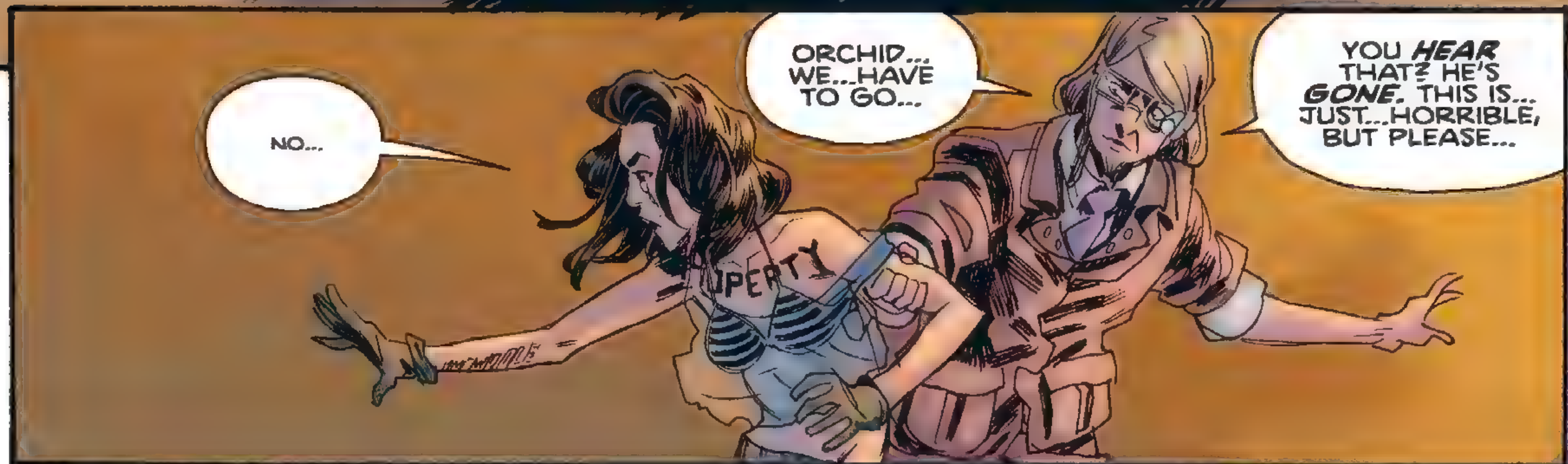
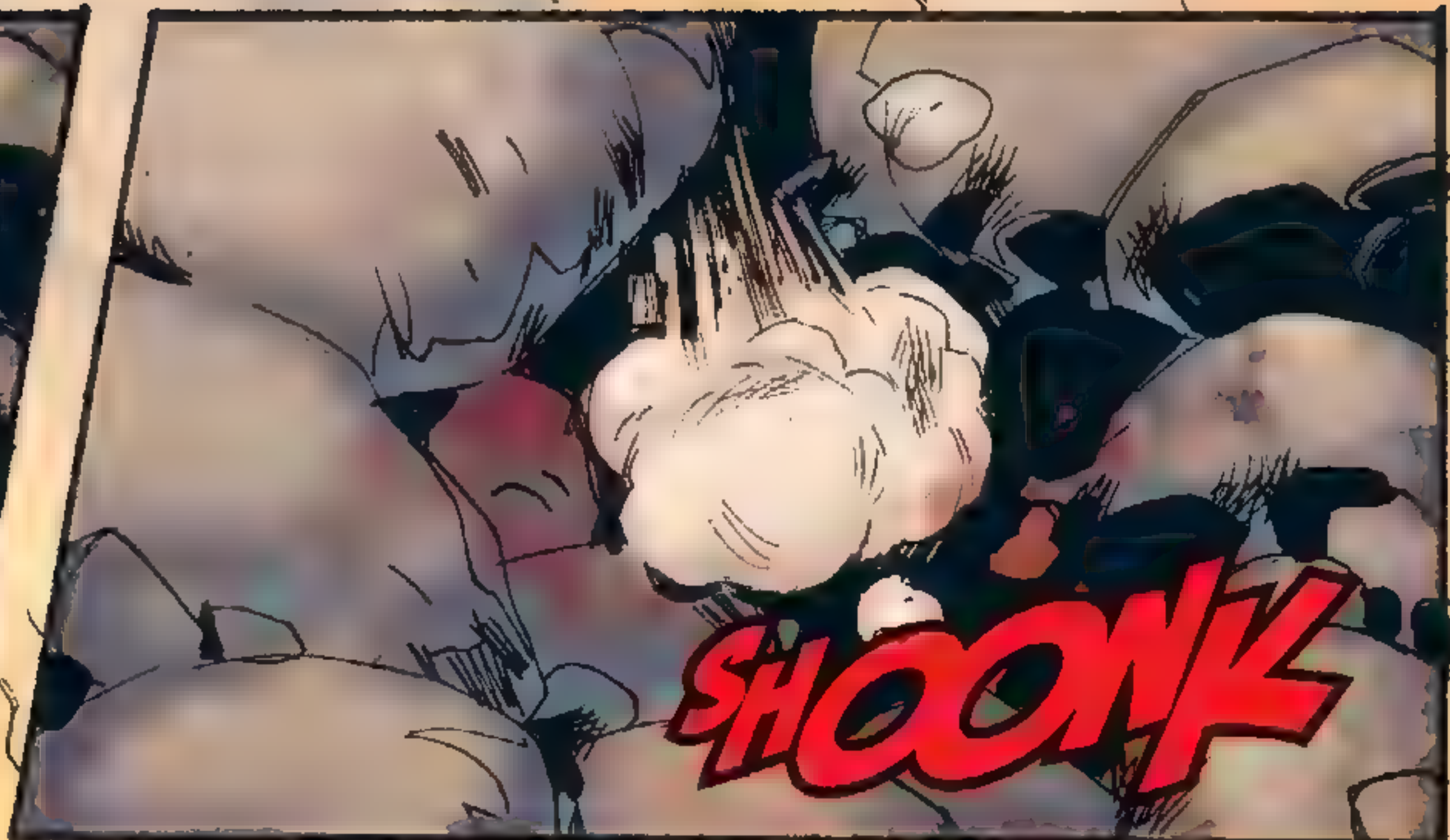
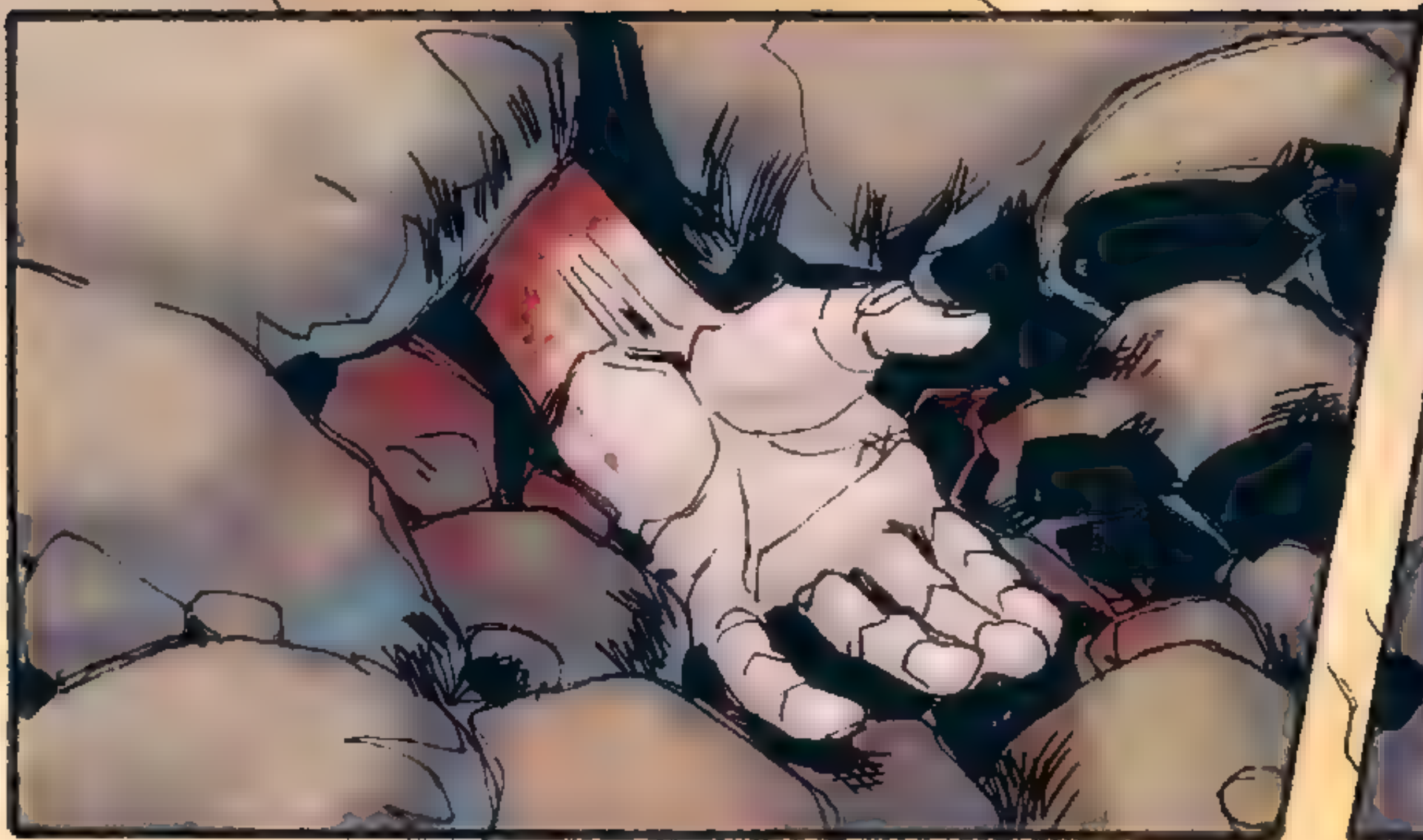


ORCHID!!!



Nooo!

CRASH

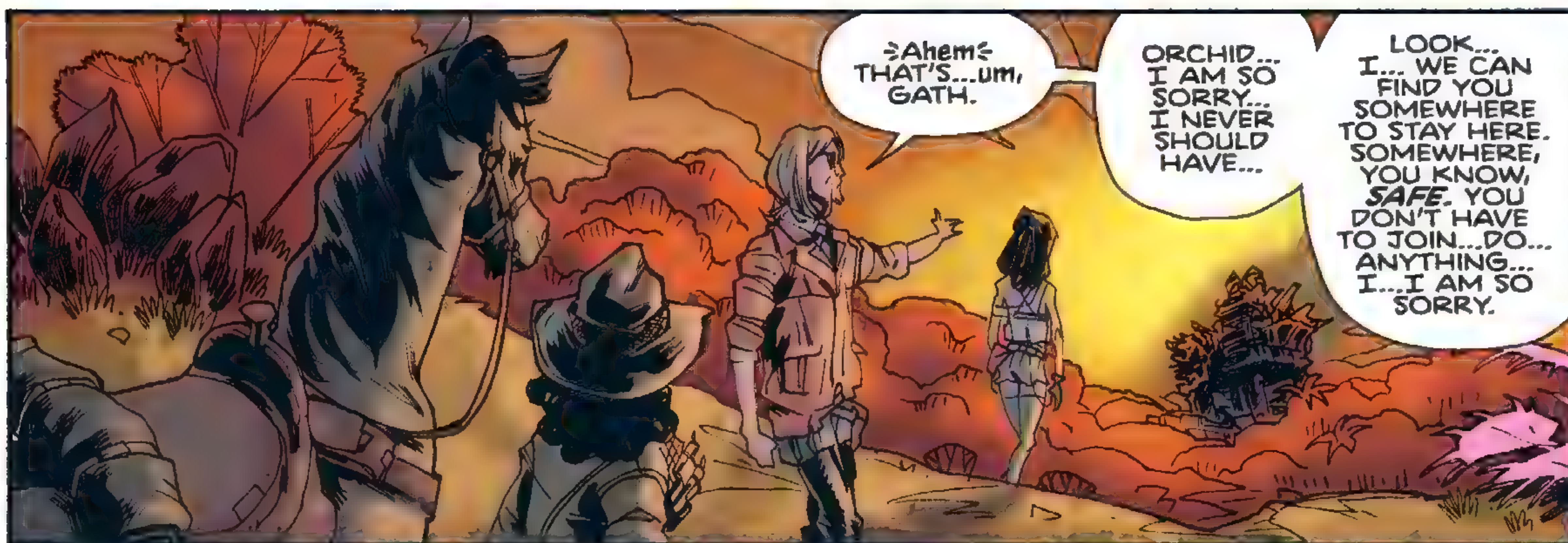
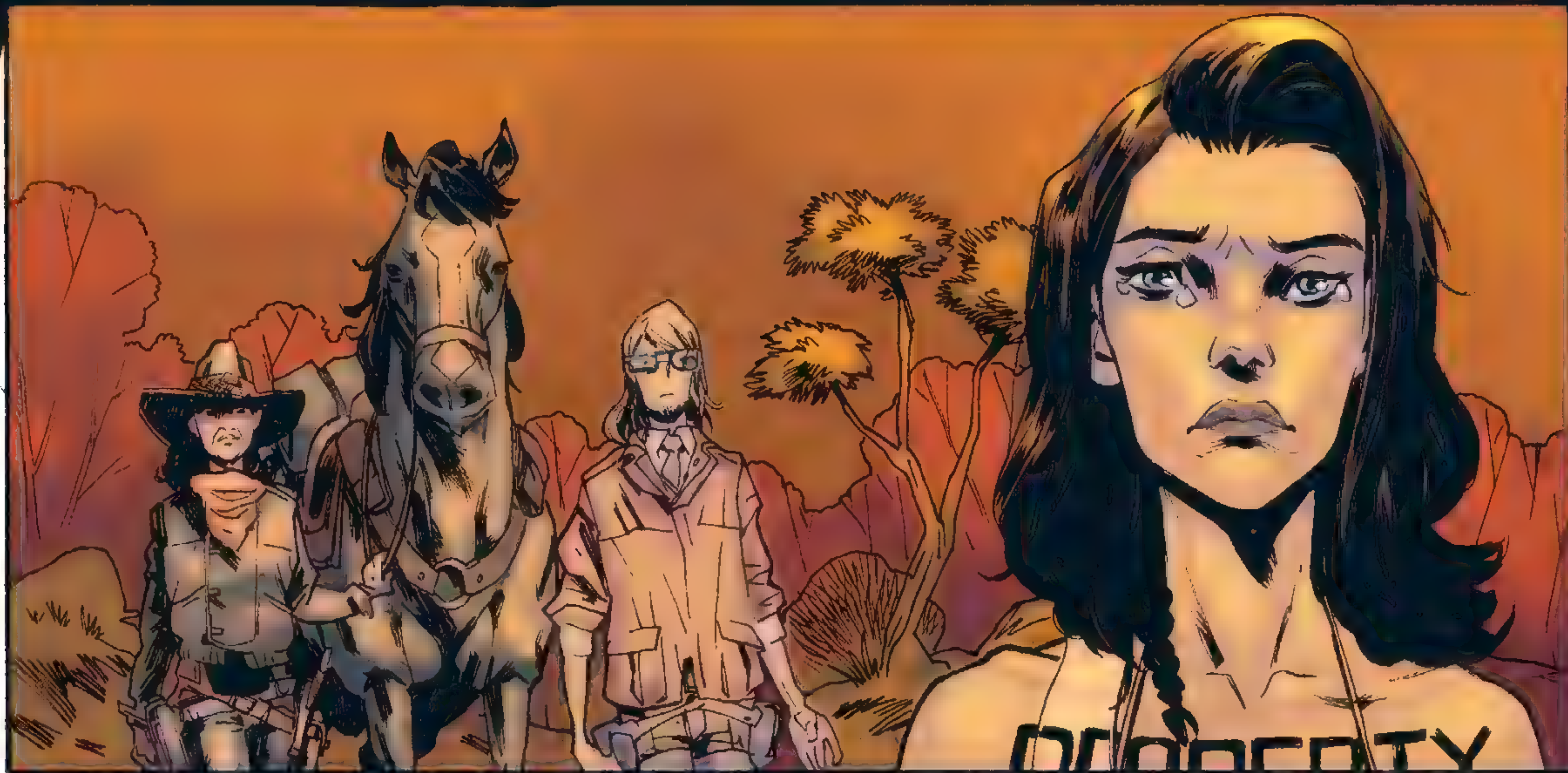


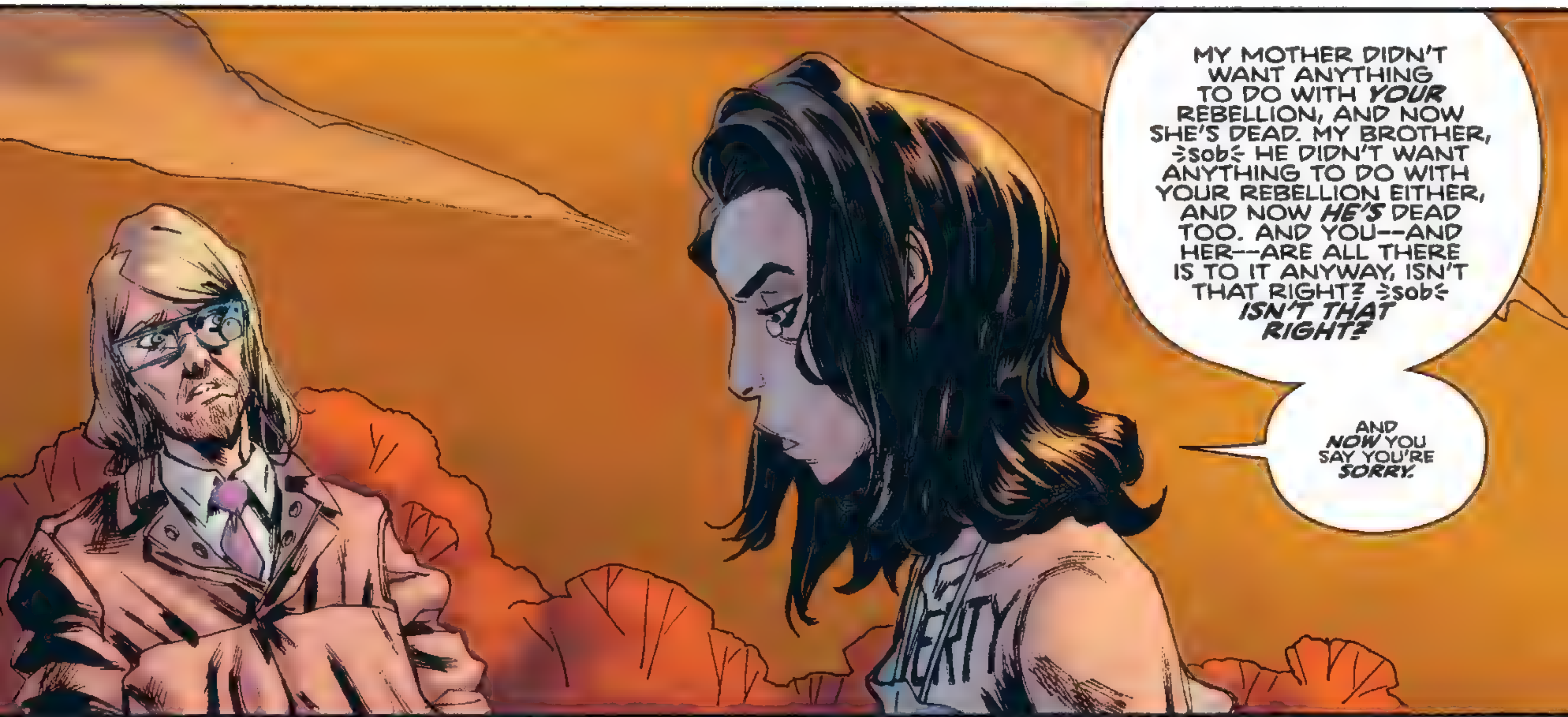
NO...

ORCHID... WE... HAVE TO GO...

YOU HEAR THAT? HE'S GONE. THIS IS... JUST... HORRIBLE, BUT PLEASE...

LATER...





MY MOTHER DIDN'T WANT ANYTHING TO DO WITH *YOUR* REBELLION, AND NOW SHE'S DEAD. MY BROTHER, *sob* HE DIDN'T WANT ANYTHING TO DO WITH YOUR REBELLION EITHER, AND NOW *HE'S* DEAD TOO. AND YOU--AND HER--ARE ALL THERE IS TO IT ANYWAY, ISN'T THAT RIGHT? *sob* *ISN'T THAT RIGHT?*

AND *NOW* YOU SAY YOU'RE *SORRY*.



WE'LL LISTEN TO ME, BOTH OF YOU, AND LISTEN *GOOD*. YOU'RE BOTH COMING WITH *ME* NOW.

I WILL NOT REST, *NOT A SINGLE MOMENT*, UNTIL I HAVE AVENGED THEIR DEATHS.



FORTRESS PENUEL

SO...YOU *STILL* HAVE NOTHING TO SAY, ANZIO?

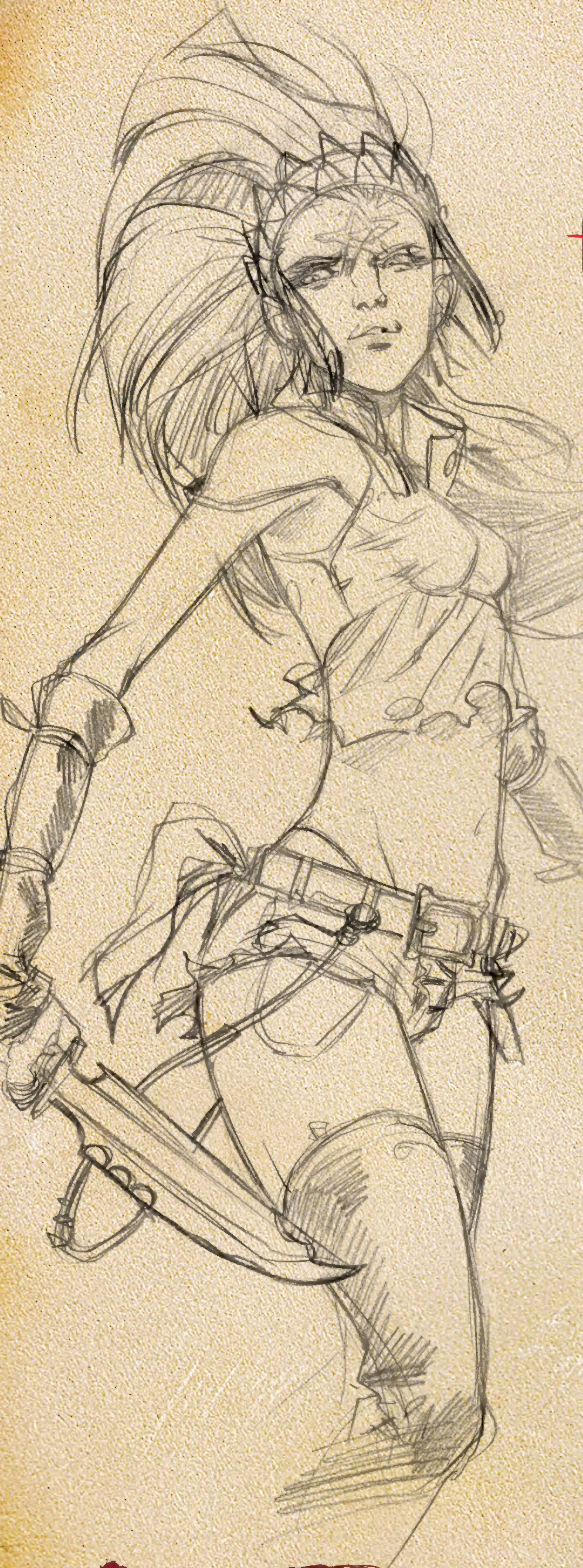
TELL ME WHERE YOUR COMRADES ARE AND SAVE YOURSELF TORMENT MAGNIFIED BEYOND YOUR KNOWING. I ASSURE YOU, THIS WHOLE PATHETIC EPISODE ENDS *NOW*.





AAAAAAHHH!!

...THIS
FIGHT
STARTS
NOW.



THE MAKING OF ORCHID

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN DRAWN TO EPIC TALES. *Beowulf*, *Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars*. But for me, there was always something missing. I could never entirely get behind the *goal*. "C'mon, subjects! Let's get the king back on the throne!" Or "To arms, vassals! Let's return the princess to glory!" In my book, kings and princesses are the bad guys. But what was really missing from these epic tales was the unspoken but ever present dirty five-letter word: **CLASS**. Who rules who and why? Who has a lot and who has nothing? And why the hell doesn't somebody *do* something about it?! In *Orchid* the cool monsters, the narrow escapes, and the epic battles are front and center, but somebody finally *does* something about the remorseless inequality that mirrors our own world. And that somebody is Orchid.

I met a lot of "Orchids" when I first moved to Los Angeles. I had hoped to skyrocket to rock superstardom by taking over the Sunset Strip heavy-metal scene, but none of those bands would have me. My hair wasn't right, my skin wasn't right, and my politics were miles apart from the prevailing spandex/limos/groupies ethos. Dejected, I somehow made my way to the east-side underground rock scene, and since I come from a conservative Illinois suburb and went to a stuffy Ivy League college, no one was more surprised than I when I found myself surrounded by a new set of friends—mostly drug addicts and prostitutes. They didn't judge me. They accepted me for who I am. And in turn I discovered that they were much more than the stigma that society imposed upon them. They were caring and kind. They were artists and intellectuals. They were damaged and beautiful. They were friends and revolutionaries. Some are still alive today, and sadly, some are not. The character Orchid is a composite of my closest *compañeras* from that time.

This volume is dedicated to them.

TOM MORELLO

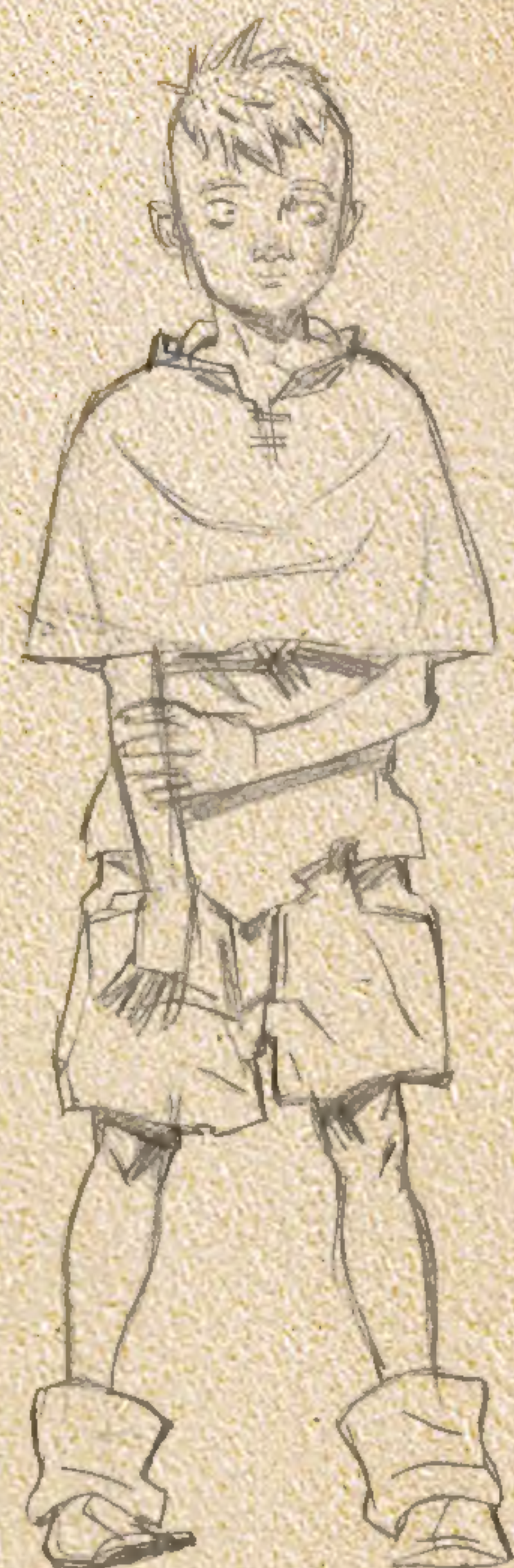
An early concept design of Orchid by Scott Hepburn, which landed him the official illustrating duties on the series.



SIMON



ORCHID



YEHZU

ABOVE: The model sheet for our three main characters at the start of the series.



ABOVE: The model sheet for the mysterious mask worn by General China.
FACING: The variant cover art by Shepard Fairey.

ORCHID



THE FIGHT HAS ONLY JUST BEGUN!

COMING SOON . . .

ORCHID VOLUME 2 DECEMBER 2012

ORCHID VOLUME 3 SUMMER 2013

READ THE NEXT CHAPTER of *Orchid* monthly. Head to your local comic-book shop for more information. Each issue features new music by Tom Morello! Find out more at NightwatchmanMusic.com.

Visit NightwatchmanMusic.com and enter the following access codes for a free musical score by Tom Morello:

CHAPTER 1: NO CODE NEEDED

CHAPTER 2: SIMON298

CHAPTER 3: ORCHID557

CHAPTER 4: YEHZU126



DARKHORSE.COM

AVAILABLE AT YOUR LOCAL COMICS SHOP OR BOOKSTORE

To find a comics shop in your area, call 1-888-266-4226 or visit ComicShopLocator.com.

For more information or to order direct, visit DarkHorse.com or call 1-800-862-0052 Mon.-Fri. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Pacific Time.

Prices and availability subject to change without notice.

Text and illustrations of Orchid™ © 2012 Tom Morello.

